NATION

Here are 3 factors causing heatwave in many states

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ICC issues team rankings; Aussies take top spot in Tests

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Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 4 MAY 2024 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 24 SHAWWAL, 1445 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 105 | Pages: 8

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BENGALURU'S FORECAST

Yesterday
Min temp: 26°C
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Today
Min temp: 25°C
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Rahul makes risky 'chess move' with Rae Bareli shift

The Gandhi scion dropped Amethi and moved to Rae Bareli

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Rahul Gandhi describes himself as the best chess player among Indian politicians, and his latest gambit appears to be his decision to contest from Rae Bareli instead of his home ground Amethi.

Gandhi obviously hopes that the move will checkmate opponents BJP sees it as a cowardly retreat from the battleground.

This comes days after the Congress put out a video of Gandhi talking about his interest in the board game and its similarities with politics. In the video, when Gandhi is asked who is the best chess player among Indian politicians, he said, "Me".

Gandhi filed his papers from Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli constituency in the afternoon, barely an hour before nominations closed for the Lok Sabha seat on Friday.

He was accompanied by Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as he filed his papers around 2 pm.

Gandhi had made his poll debut from Amethi in 2004 and saw relative smooth sailing in the first 10 years with the UPA being in power, while the last 10 years have been challenging.

He won the 2014 polls against the BJP's Smriti Irani by over a lakh votes but she had run a spirited campaign and made inroads into the Congress citadel of Amethi.

She finally breached the fortress in 2019, beating the Gandhi family scion by over 55,000 votes.

However, Gandhi's 'Plan B' seemed to have worked as he contested the polls from two constituencies and won from Kerala's Wayanad, ensuring that his stint in Parliament continued.

Some of the earlier electoral gambles of Gandhi such as pitching the 2019 polls campaign of the Congress on the Rafale issue have not paid off but Gandhi has always stuck to his convictions and maintained his attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, including on the Adani issue.

He has been at the receiving end of criticism from various quarters and often been dubbed a "reluctant politician" or "part-time politician", but he has remained unfazed by such criticism.

At a press briefing in Ghaziabad a couple of weeks ago, Gandhi had taken a swipe at the media for dubbing him a "non-serious" politician.

He had cited his involvement with the MGNREGA scheme, the Land Acquisition Bill, the Bhatta Parsaul movement, Niyamgiri Hills matter, and had said for the media all this was "non-serious while talking about Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai and Virat Kohli was serious".

In 2004, Gandhi announced his entry into Indian politics, contesting his first election from Amethi, the same seat that was represented by his mother Sonia Gandhi (1999-2004) and his late father Rajiv Gandhi between 1981-91.

Rahul Gandhi won by an overwhelming margin of almost three lakh votes. He again won in 2009 but his margin was reduced in 2014 and was defeated by Irani in 2019. He had been criticised for not spending enough time in the constituency, allowing the BJP to make inroads into the Congress fortress. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Rahul Gandhi with Sonia Gandhi in Rae Bareli on Thursday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Rahul has ₹20 crore assets

Rae Bareli, 3 May

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who filed his nomination from the Rae Bareli Lok Sabha seat on Friday, declared assets of over Rs 20 crore in his papers. Gandhi has declared movable assets to the tune of Rs 9,24,59,264, including shares worth Rs 3,81,33,572, a bank balance of Rs 26,25,157 and gold bonds of Rs 15,21,740. The former Congress president has declared immovable assets with a current market price of Rs 11,15,02,598. —*PTI*

3 FIRS BOOKED

Prajwal raped me at gunpoint: Victim

Prajwal Revanna ***PHOTO: PTI***

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Criminal Investigation Department investigating the sexual abuse allegations against JD(S) leader and NDA's Hassan Lok Sabha candidate Prajwal Revanna has registered a case of rape against him, based on the complaint by a party worker.

The CID booked Prajwal, grandson of former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, after a JD(S) worker from Hassan lodged a complaint against him.

Besides the rape charges, CID invoked sections against Prajwal pertaining to voyeurism, disrobing and making videos and taking photographs by threatening the complainant.

She said Prajwal had threatened that he would kill her as well as her husband, if she revealed to anyone what he had done.

The accused allegedly forced her to satisfy his lust whenever he demanded, and threatened to make her video public if she did not cooperate.

So far, three FIRs have been registered against Prajwal and HD Revanna in Hassan, Mysuru and Bengaluru. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

RAPE CASE BOOKED AGAINST PRAJWAL: CM

BAGALKOT, 3 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said a rape case has been booked against JD(S) leader and NDA's Hassan candidate Prajwal Revanna. Siddaramaiah said he has directed police to identify, trace and secure the victims given the alleged kidnapping of a victim at Krishnaraja Nagar town in Mysuru district.

The mother of three children was allegedly abducted by Holenarasipura MLA and Prajwal's father HD Revanna and his confidant Sathish Babanna from her home after her 20-year-old son complained to the police. He said videos showed that his mother was allegedly tied and raped by Prajwal. Police have arrested Babanna and are interrogating him in connection with the case, a police source said.

The Chief Minister said BJP committed a wrong in Prajwal Revanna case. "Both BJP and JD(S) knew about Prajwal Revanna's videos. Prajwal Revanna's case is not just sexual harassment. He has raped women," Siddaramaiah said.

He said, "Will a woman lie that she has been raped? Won't her life get destroyed after the complaint? If a married woman says openly that she has been raped then we have to accept it." —*PTI*

K'taka Health Dept denies circular on cold drinks

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Karnataka Department of Health and Family Welfare denied issuing a circular advising against consuming refrigerated drinks, ice cream, and soft drinks. This comes after a letter from Sri Siddhartha Law College in Chikkaballapur went viral on social media, claiming such a directive exists. The letter, dated 2 May and signed by the College Principal, cites information from the Health Department. It warns students and parents to avoid cold drinks due to a supposed link to blood clotting and heart attacks, especially in those vaccinated against Covid. However, Health Department clarified that this information is false. They have advised the public to rely only on official government channels for health updates. —*Salar News*

Police says Vemula not Dalit; absolves BJP leaders, ex-VC

HYDERABAD, 3 MAY

Police have filed a closure report before a local court in its probe into the death of Rohith Vemula, a student of University of Hyderabad, claiming he was not a Dalit and died by suicide as he feared that his "real identity" would be discovered. The Cyberabad police that investigated the case informed the court that Rohith Vemula did not belong to Scheduled Caste and that he was aware of it. Vemula died by suicide in 2016. "The deceased had multiple issues worrying him which could have driven him to commit suicide," the report said. Further, the report said, "Despite best efforts, no evidence could be found to establish that the actions of the accused have driven the deceased to commit suicide." The then UoH vice-chancellor Appa Rao Podile and incumbent Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya were among the accused.. —*PTI*

1 YEAR OF MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Family and friends of missing people in Manipur get emotional while appealing to the State and Central governments to bring back their loved ones, in New Delhi on Thursday. On 3 May, 2023, tensions between Meitei and Kuki in the state spiralled into violence, which claimed 220 lives. At least 1,500 have been injured, around 60,000 people displaced ***PHOTO: ANI***

>>>More on Page 5

WB Guv accused of molesting woman

KOLKATA, 3 MAY

A day after a contractual employee of Raj Bhavan accused him of molesting her, West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Friday said that he expects that more such allegations are "in the offing".

Describing the allegations as "absurd drama", Bose, in an apparent reference to the ruling Trinamool Congress, said that none would be able to deter him from his "determined efforts to expose corruption and curb violence".

The ruling Trinamool Congress on Friday said that the party has no role in this

CV Ananda Bose ***PHOTO: PTI***

and demanded an impartial inquiry into the allegation to ascertain the truth. Claiming that character assassination is the last resort of a "failing malevolence", Bose said, "A more sinister plot has been hatched in the Raj Bhavan".

Bose mocked the allegations saying that one day he would also be blamed for the Bengal Feminine of 1943 as well as the '1946 Calcutta Killings'. Senior TMC leader and industry minister Shashi Panja on Friday said that the party has no agenda and no role behind this. She said the alleged incident of molestation was shocking and hard to believe that this had happened inside Raj Bhavan. Reacting to the alleged incident, senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh claimed that the saffron party had information that such a conspiracy was being plotted. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

SC asks Centre to change law on cruelty on women

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Supreme Court on Friday asked Centre to consider making necessary changes in sections 85 and 86 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita to avoid its misuse for lodging of false or exaggerated complaints after taking into consideration the pragmatic realities.

The court said it had asked Centre 14 years ago to have a relook at the anti-dowry law as exaggerated versions of the incident are reflected in a large number of complaints.

The observation from the apex court came while quashing a dowry-harassment case filed by a woman. The man and his family demanded dowry and caused mental and physical trauma to her. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act -- to completely overhaul the country's criminal justice system. —*PTI*

RED ALERT ON SEA SWELL ISSUED FOR KERALA, TAMIL NADU

T'PURAM, 3 MAY

Central agencies have issued a red alert for 'Kallakkadal', warning of sudden sea swells causing rough waves in coastal areas of Kerala and the south Tamil Nadu coast on Saturday and Sunday.

This marks the first time a red alert has been issued for the phenomenon of 'Kallakkadal' -- the sudden swell of the seas causing rough waves. The officials have urged fishermen and coastal residents to take precautions. The coastal areas of Kerala and southern Tamil Nadu are likely to experience the 'kallakkadal' phenomenon from 2.30 am on Saturday to 11.30 pm on Sunday, weather agencies said, while issuing the red alert. There is possibility of extremely strong waves, rough seas and sea incursion. —*PTI*

SC to consider interim bail to Kejri due to LS polls

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

In a ray of hope to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal after 43 days of his arrest in the excise policy-linked money laundering case, Supreme Court on Friday told the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to be ready with the case as it may consider hearing arguments on his interim bail on 7 May on account of Lok Sabha polls in Delhi.

Kejriwal is currently lodged in Tihar jail under judicial custody.

A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for ED that the hearing on Kejriwal's plea against arrest is likely to take time and therefore, the court was considering hearing the probe agency on interim bail to him.

"It appears we can't complete today. We will post it on Tuesday morning itself. Mr Raju, one more thing. If it is going to take time and it does appear to us that it may take some time, we will then consider the question of interim bail because of the elections," the bench said.

Raju submitted that he will oppose the bail to Kejriwal and pointed out that to the statements made by AAP leader Sanjay Singh after getting bail last month in the case.

"We are not commenting on it either way. We are just saying we will hear on interim bail and not saying we will grant interim bail. We may or may not grant interim bail," the bench said.

It also told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, "Just one thing more. Please also take instructions. Because of the position he holds, whether he should be signing official files?"

During the hearing, Singhvi informed the bench that on 16 March the elections were announced and on 21 March, Kejriwal was arrested by the ED on the basis of statements and materials which were available with the agency since last July. —*PTI*

SOUTH WORST HIT

Most reservoirs have water shortage

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Central Water Commission underscored a notable deficit in reservoir storage nationwide, which has dipped to 28 per cent from 35 per cent of the capacity from last year.

CWC, which monitors live water storage in 150 water reservoirs, found the southern region to be the most hit.

A total of 42 reservoirs are monitored by the commission in southern region, which includes Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

As per the CWC's latest Reservoir Storage bulletin, the total live storage available in these reservoirs is 8.353 BCM or 16 per cent of total capacity of 53.334 billion cubic metres (BCM). The storage during the corresponding period of 2023 in

Krishna and Cauvery basins are experiencing significant deficiencies in storage ***PHOTO: PTI***

was 28 per cent of the total capacity of these reservoirs, while the average storage of last ten years during the corresponding period was 22 per cent.

According to the report, the total live storage in 150 monitored reservoirs stood at 50.432 BCM, which is a mere 28 per cent of their combined live storage capacity. This figure represents a decline compared to the storage levels recorded during the same period last year, amounting to only 81 per cent of last year's storage -- 62.212 BCM -- and significantly lower than the ten-year average, which was 96 per cent of the average storage capacity.

In the northern region, which includes states like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, the live storage available in monitored reservoirs was noted at 6.051 BCM, only 31 per cent of the total capacity. This figure is below both last year's storage levels (37 per cent) and the ten-year average (34 per cent).

Moreover, the bulletin highlighted specific reservoirs and river systems exhibiting varying storage conditions. Some areas, like the Subarnarekha, Brahmaputra, and Narmada river basins, show storage levels better than normal, while others such as the Krishna and Cauvery river basins, are experiencing significant deficiencies in storage. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Two dead, 15 ill after consuming lake fish in Hassan

HASSAN, 3 MAY

Two people died and at least 15 others fell critically ill after consuming fish from the lake in a village near Hassan. The deceased are Ravikumar, 46, from Basavanahalli village and Puttamma, 50, from Sanyasipura. The 15 people are undergoing treatment at Arakalagudu and Hassan hospitals. Puttamma, who was visiting her mother's home, ventured to the Basavanahalli lake to catch fish. However she found that the lake had dried up due to severe drought. Undeterred, the villagers resorted to catching fish from the mud-caked lake bed. *—Salar News*

Kolar comes 1st in Atalji Janasnehi Kendras' ranking

KOLAR, 3 APRIL

For the second consecutive month, Kolar district has secured the first rank in the State for the performance of Atalji Janasnehi Kendra (Nemmadi Kendra). The district, which was occupying 28th position two years back, came first in April for disposing of 29,012 applications. Atal Janasnehi Kendra issues 25 odd certificates such as Income Certificate, Caste Certificate, Living Certificate, Widow Certificate, Small and Marginal Farmer Certificate and Landless Certificate. Kolar Deputy Commissioner Akram Pasha and his team played a key role in the improved performance of the district, officials said. *—Salar News*

'BJP FAILED TO PROTECT THE MARGINALISED'

PHOTO: PTI

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

BJP-led Central government failed to support the impoverished and marginalised segments of Indian society, said Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar during a campaign rally at Mundgod in Uttara Kannada on Friday.

"BJP government is dead. Lakhs of people died during Covid due to mismanagement and now people who are vaccinated are dying, thanks to BJP's corruption," Shivakumar said.

He questioned allocation of funds for Covid relief. "BJP said it has released Rs 20 lakh crore for Covid relief; has anyone received relief? Where is that money? They printed Modi's photo on vaccination certificates but why did not print his photo on the death certificates of Covid victims," he said. He criticised BJP's economic policies, citing merger of banks and unfulfilled promises of farmer income and repatriation of corrupt funds. *—Salar News*

SDPI backed Cong in K'taka, says Shah

He alleged 'anti-national' elements were involved in Rameshwaram Cafe bomb blast

HUKKERI, 3 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday claimed Congress came to power in State with the support of Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), the political arm of banned Popular Front of India (PFI). He also alleged that "anti-national elements" of SDPI were involved in the bomb blast in Bengaluru, he said referring to the Rameshwaram cafe blast on 1 March.

Targeting the Siddaramaiah-led government, he urged it to hand over the probe in the Hubballi student Neha Hiremath murder case to CBI if the State was unable to investigate properly.

The top BJP leader addressed a public meeting here in Belagavi for party candidate from Chikkodi Lok Sabha segment Annasaheb Jolle.

Amit Shah urged to hand over the Neha Hiremath murder probe to CBI
PHOTO: PTI

"Don't worry, let Congress government do anything... Narendra Modi government will keep Karnataka secure," he added.

Chikkodi along with 13 other Lok Sabha segments in the state will go to polls on 7 May.

Referring to the murder of Neha Hiremath at her college campus last month, Shah said

> **Rahul Baba (Congress leader Rahul Gandhi) used to say don't take corona vaccine, it is Modi vaccine, it is good that people don't listen to him and every one took (the jab). At night in the dark, Rahul Baba along with his sister took vaccination. Rahul Baba you should be ashamed that even during a pandemic like corona, you did politics**
>
> -Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

some in the government said that the killing was due to personal issues.

"What a personal issue? A girl, who did not want to undergo religious conversion was murdered. I met her mother day-before-yesterday in Hubballi. She told me that her daughter was under pressure to undergo religious conversion," he added.

Neha Hiremath, 23, daughter of Congress councillor of Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation Niranjan Hiremath, was stabbed to death on the campus of the her college. The accused Fayaz Khondunaik, who fled from the scene, was arrested by the police subsequently.Congress cannot keep the country united and secure, Shah said, and listed out the achievements of Modi rule in the last ten years.

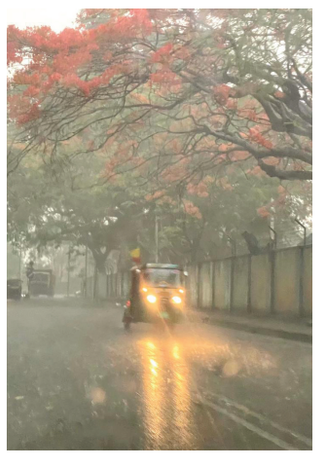
"Rahul Baba (Congress leader Rahul Gandhi) used to say don't take corona vaccine, it is Modi vaccine, it is good that people don't listen to him and every one took (the jab). At night in the dark, Rahul Baba along with his sister took vaccination. Rahul Baba you should be ashamed that even during a pandemic like corona, you did politics," he said.

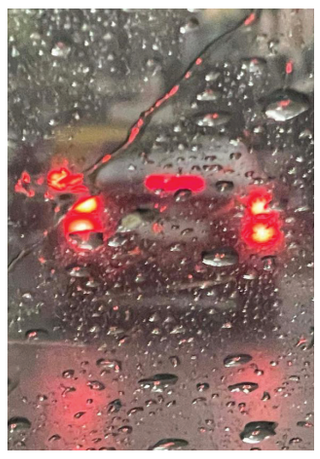
Shah said, in this election, on one side there is Congress which "did Rs 12 lakh crore worth of scam and corruption", and on the other side there is BJP led by Narendra Modi, who despite being Chief Minister and Prime Minister for 23 years, does not have even a single allegation of corruption against him.

"On one side there is Rahul Baba who goes on foreign vacations once in three months, while on the other side there is Modi, who for 23 years did not take leave even on Deepawali and ate sweets with soldiers of the country (on the festival)," he said, as he asked the people to choose between the two.

"Whom do you want, 'Pariwarwaadi" (dynast) Congress or BJP that follows 'Parampara' (traditions)," he asked. *—PTI*

Afternoon showers bring relief from heat





BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Bengaluru witnessed a much-needed respite from the summer heat on Friday as rains lashed various parts of the City in the afternoon. The downpour, which began around 2:15pm, caused some traffic disruptions and waterlogging.

Several areas received moderate to heavy rainfall. Cantonment, Rajajinagar, Malleswaram, Vasanth Nagar, Banaswadi, HBR Layout, Kammanahalli, Lingarajapuram, BTM Layout, Jayanagar, Basaveshwaranagar, Kamakshipalya, Kengeri and Nayandahalli experienced a good spell of rain, with JP Nagar witnessing a shower of hail stones.

Sadashivanagar, Seshadripuram, Shivajinagar, Bellandur, CV Raman Nagar, Marathahalli, Whitefield, Kalyan Nagar, Hebbal, Mathikere, Bommasandra, Electronic City, Kothnur and Rajarajeshwari Nagar reported drizzling.

Mahadevapura saw the showers stop earlier in the afternoon, but Turahalli forest area experienced heavy rain accompanied by strong winds and lightning. Cubbon Park was left misty after the heavy rains, offering a picturesque evening scene for City residents. *—Salar News*

Benglureans witnessed rain after a long time in the City on Friday. People drive through a puddle near Vidhana Soudha on Friday
PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

SEX SCANDAL

Fresh kidnapping case filed against Revanna, Prajwal: Police

MYSURU, 3 MAY

Former minister HD Revanna and his son Prajwal Revanna face fresh troubles as a case has been lodged based on a youth's complaint alleging that his mother was abducted after a video of her being allegedly tied and raped by Prajwal emerged.

In the case lodged on Thursday night, the 20-year-old complainant from Krishnaraja Nagar town in Mysuru district said his mother was kidnapped by Revanna.

The youth said six years ago his mother worked at Revanna's residence in Holenarasipura. Three years ago, she quit her job and returned to her hometown. About five days ago, Revanna's confidant Sathish Babanna came to his house and said police may come to them for an inquiry and they should not reveal anything.

Prajwal Revanna, HD Revanna
PHOTO: / X @ HD REVANNA

"On 29 April at 9pm, Babanna came to our house and said if your mother is caught then you will be in trouble and you may all go to jail. Revanna has asked me to take you. He then took her on a motorcycle," the complainant said.

The youth said he had no clue where his mother had been taken away. However, on 1 May, he said he received a call from his friends who told him that a video has surfaced showing his mother was tied with a rope and Prajwal allegedly raped her. The complainant said there was a threat to his mother's life and sought police help to find out where his mother was.

KR Nagar police under Mysuru Rural sub-division registered a case against Revanna and Babanna of kidnapping, wrongful confinement and connivance. *—PTI*

Second notice served to Revanna: Parameshwara

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Friday said a second notice has been served to JD(S) MLA and former minister H D Revanna in molestation and abduction registered against him.

Speaking to reporters here, Parameshwara said earlier a notice was served under section 41 A of CrPC to which Prajwal Revanna's advocate had sought seven days' time.

The Special Investigation Team, which was set up to investigate the sexual abuse allegations against Prajwal, has replied that it would not be possible to give them the time sought as there is no such provision, the minister said.

G Parameshwara PHOTO: PTI

He added that H Revanna who was also served the notice has sought 24 hours' time.

"As time cannot be given, procedurally a second notice has been issued (to MLA Revanna), because law says due opportunity has to be given. If they don't respond to the notice, action will be taken in accordance with law," the minister said.

Amid reports that the victims of Prajwal's alleged sexual abuse are not coming forward to record their statements, Parameshwara said, "We are trying to instill courage in them to come forward and give statements; the government will protect them. SIT has identified those in the video and is giving them courage... We expect more women to come and give statements."

Underlining the gravity of the matter his department is dealing with, the minister said this was not like any other case.Stating that a lot of the information pertaining to the case cannot be shared in the public domain, Parameshwara said a second case has been registered. *—PTI*

REVANNA WITHDRAWS BAIL PLEA

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

JD(S) MLA and former minister HD Revanna on Friday withdrew his bail application in a Bengaluru sessions court, after a Special Investigation Team told the court that there are no non-bailable charges against him in the case of his alleged sexual abuse of his household help.

He moved the court after a case of molestation was registered against him and his son Prajwal Revanna by a woman who worked in their household.

The development comes against the backdrop of heightened scrutiny surrounding Revanna's familial ties and political prominence within the JD(S). *—PTI*

Yuva Mitra enters India Book of Records

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 3 MAY

The 'Yuva Mitra' programme implemented by Forest Department at Bandipur Tiger Reserve has been included in India Book of Records. The 'Yuva Mitra' programme is aimed at educating students about forests and environmental conservation.

This programme holds the distinction of witnessing the highest participation in an environmental awareness initiative in the country. A total of 8,410 people, including 7,019 students, 655 teachers, 197 gram panchayat members, 395 local farmers and 143 members of tribal communities, participated in the programme. From 3 March, 2023, to 8 March, 2024, a total of 162 awareness sessions on forest conservation were conducted.

The initiative offers students free safari and nature education. An integral aspect is the issuance of 'Environment Volunteer' identity cards to students. *—Salar News*

DEFEAT BJP TO SAFEGUARD FARMERS: KRRS

BELAGAVI, 3 MAY

Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) has urged its members and others to defeat BJP in Lok Sabha elections to safeguard farmers, and uphold the values enshrined in Constitution, democracy and freedom of speech.

"Throughout history, governments have consistently neglected farmers' welfare. However, under Modi government, the plight of farmers has worsened," KRRS president Badgalpura Nagendra said on Friday.

Despite a favourable verdict on Mahadayi project, Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has failed to grant permission and the promised grant has not been released. Injustice prevailed in irrigation projects for Krishna, Kaveri, and Tungabhadra rivers. The recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission have been disregarded, he said. Echoing Nagendra's sentiments, Chamarasa Malipatila, Honorary President of Raitha Sangh, declared, "Billions in loans for businesspeople have been waived, while farmers continue to suffer. *—Salar News*

KEEPING KALABURAGI

Kharge toils hard to turn the tide in son-in-law's favour

KALABURAGI, 3 MAY

Will the son-in-law avenge the defeat of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, or will the Surgeon, who created history by ensuring the Congress stalwart's first-ever electoral loss on his home turf, recreate history?

The contest in Kalaburagi Lok Sabha segment has hotted up, amid scorching summer.

Congress wants to wrest Kalaburagi back at any cost; failure in regaining the lost bastion of its chief will be a huge embarrassment for it. BJP is fighting to retain this high-profile SC reserved segment to assert itself in this region, which was for long the grand old party's citadel.

The 81-year-old Kharge has opted out of the electoral race, citing his age along with the role of managing the party nationally and coordinating with the INDIA bloc. The party has fielded his son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani, a businessman who also manages educational institutions.

While BJP has once again fielded Umesh Jadhav, a medical surgeon, who emerged as the giant-slayer by defeating Kharge in 2019.

Kharge, who is Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, had won from Gulbarga segment twice (2009, 2014), but lost the 2019 polls to Jadhav by 95,452 votes. Popularly known as 'Solillada Saradara', (a leader without defeat), for Kharge, who was nine-time MLA, that was the first electoral loss in his political life spanning several decades.

Jadhav had quit as Congress MLA and joined BJP to contest 2019 Lok Sabha election from Kalaburagi. Jadhav, who seems to have maintained his popularity with his work as an MP, especially among his Banjara community, is also banking on Modi charisma. The Prime Minister began his Karnataka campaign from Gulbarga.

"People have realised they made a wrong decision in Assembly polls believing in guarantees (pre-poll promises of Congress). Law and order has deteriorated," Jadhav said.

Doddamani, while maintaining a low profile, has always worked actively behind the scenes in managing and strategising for Kharge's successive electoral campaigns. Doddamani said he is getting good responses from the people and is confident about winning the seat.

Gulbarga has eight assembly seats of which Congress currently holds six, and BJP and JD(S) one each. Lingayats and SC community have dominance in the segment, which also has considerable Muslim voters. *—PTI*

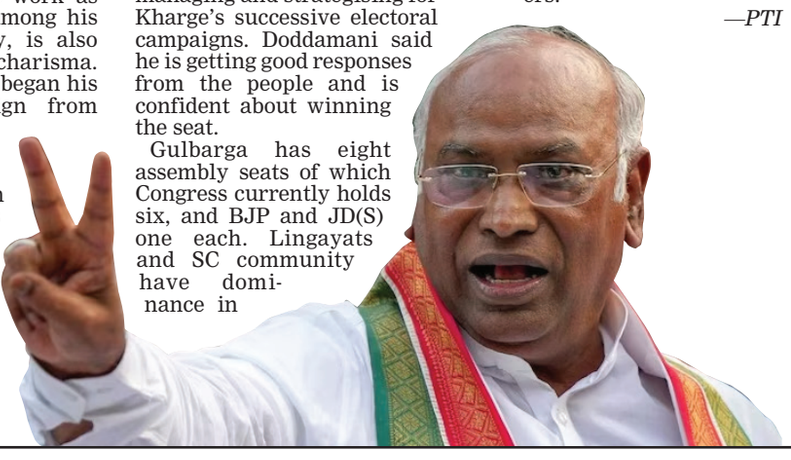


PHOTO: x/KGahtoriBJP

Former Champawat MLA Kailash Gahtori dead

DEHRADUN, 2 MAY

Former Champawat MLA Kailash Chandra Gahtori, who vacated the seat in 2022 for Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, died here on Friday morning following a prolonged illness. He was 55. Gahtori breathed his last at the Government Doon Medical College here, BJP sources said. Expressing grief over Gahtori's death, Chief Minister Dhami it was a personal loss to him as well as that of the party and the state.Describing the former MLA as his dear friend, he said, "I am unable to express this immense pain in words."Gahtori spent his entire life in public service and will always be remembered as an ideal public representative, the chief minister said. "As an MLA, his dedication towards the development of Champawat region is inspiration for us," he added.—*PTI*

Sena leader's chopper tilts, pilot injured

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

The pilot of a private helicopter scheduled to pick up a Shiv Sena (UBT) leader was injured after it tilted during landing in Maharashtra's Raigad district on Friday, a police official said. The chopper was to ferry Sushma Andhare of Sena (UBT) for a public rally in connection with the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, he said. The helicopter got tilted when the pilot tried to land on a makeshift helipad at Mahad around 9.30am, said Raigad Superintendent of Police Somnath Gharge. Prima facie, the helicopter got enveloped by a lot of dust when it was about to touch the ground which might have caused the accident, the official said. The rotor blades were broken and the chopper was partially damaged, he said. The pilot was injured and rushed to the hospital, the official said. —*PTI*

Actor-turned-TMC MP Dev's copter catches fire

MALDA, 3 MAY

Actor and TMC's Ghatal MP Deepak Adhikari had a close shave on Friday when his helicopter caught fire soon after taking off from Malda helipad forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing, police said. Adhikari, popularly known as Dev, was unharmed and later travelled by road to reach his subsequent destination in Raninagar for another election rally, officials said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee telephoned Dev and enquired about the situation. Dev was here to attend an election campaign for party candidate for Maldah (Uttar) Lok Sabha constituency Prasun Banerjee. The TMC MP said, "I survived with people's love and blessings."—*PTI*

MP: MLA'sdaughter held by Lokayukta for bribery

PANNA, 3 MAY

The daughter of a BJP MLA in Madhya Pradesh was arrested for allegedly seeking and accepting a bribe from a businessman, a Lokayukta official said on Friday. Amangang Nagar Parishad president Sarika Khatik,40, who is the daughter of BJP's Hatta MLA Uma Khatik, was held on Thursday, Sagar-based Lokayukta Inspector Roshani Jain told PTI. "One Raghvendra Raj Modi lodged a complaint with us on 29 April stating Sarika Khatik had demanded Rs 40,000 from him to clear his bill of more than Rs 1,30,000. The next day he provided us with a recording to back his claim. We arrested her while she took Rs 30,000 during a trap on Thursday at her office in the Nagar Parishad," Jain said. She was charged under Prevention of Corruption Act and released on bail on the spot, the Lokayukta inspector added. —*PTI*

Gandhi family leaves Amethi for first time in 25 yrs

Amethi was citadel for the Gandhis

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Uttar Pradesh's Amethi has long been synonymous with the Gandhis but it would be the first time in 25 years that a Gandhi family member will not be contesting election from the Lok Sabha seat.

Considered a citadel of the Gandhi family since its creation as a constituency in 1967, Amethi has been represented by a Gandhi family member for about 31 years since then.

The Congress fortress was breached in the last general election in 2019 when BJP's Smriti Irani beat Rahul Gandhi by more than 55,000 votes.

This time, Rahul Gandhi will contest the Lok Sabha election from the Rae Bareli seat, while Kishori Lal Sharma, a close aide of the Gandhi family, has been fielded from the Amethi Lok Sabha seat.

Sharma was the key person who looked after the two prestigious constituencies on behalf of the Gandhis.

The last time a non-Gandhi was in the fray from the constituency was in 1998, when Satish Sharma, a close aide of Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, contested the polls but lost to the BJP's Sanjaya Sinh.

Sonia Gandhi reclaimed the seat in 1999 routing Singh by over 3 lakh votes.

In 2004, Sonia shifted to the adjacent Rae Bareli constituency to make way for her son Rahul Gandhi.

Rahul won the constituency for three consecutive terms in 2004, 2009 and 2014.

Contesting for the fourth time in 2019, he lost to Smriti Irani, who hit the headlines as a 'giant killer'.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra **PHOTO: PTI**

Amethi is one of the 80 parliamentary seats in Uttar Pradesh and comprises five assembly segments — Tiloi, Salon, Jagdishpur, Gauriganj, and Amethi.

Over the past few years, the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Bahujan Samaj Party have emerged as the three main players in the constituency.Its first Member of Parliament was Vidya Dhar Bajpai of the Congress who was elected in 1967 and held the seat in the next election in 1971. —*PTI*

Smriti Irani **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong already accepted defeat: Smriti

Amethi, 3 May

Union minister Smriti Irani Friday said that the Gandhis' absence from the electoral fray in Amethi indicates that the Congress has already accepted its defeat. "Gandhi family not being present in the election fray in Amethi indicates that Congress party has accepted its defeat in Amethi even before the polling on the seat," Irani, the sitting MP from Amethi, said. She made the remarks responding to Congress loyalist KL Sharma filing his nomination from the seat. "Had they felt that there was any chance of victory on the seat, they would have contested from here and not fielded their proxy," the BJP leader said, referring to the Gandhi family. —*PTI*

Feroze Gandhi to Rahul: Bareli's tryst with Cong

Seat was first held by Feroze Gandhi

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The surprise nomination of Rahul Gandhi from Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli brings the focus back on the VVIP segment which was first represented in the Lok Sabha by the former Congress president's grandfather Feroze Gandhi, who held the seat in the first two elections after Independence.

The strong foundations that Feroze Gandhi laid in the constituency were later nurtured and strengthened by his wife and former prime minister Indira Gandhi, who won from the seat in 1967, 1971 and 1980, followed by friends and family members of the Gandhi family.

Indira Gandhi contested from two seats in 1980 -- Rae Bareli and Medak in Telangana -- and chose to retain the Medak seat. Arun Nehru won the 1980 bypoll and subsequently in 1984.

From Arun Nehru, who was late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's right-hand man, to Sheila Kaul, another Gandhi kin, Rae Bareli returned several of the Gandhi family members and aides to the Lok Sabha.

The seat was held by Congress' RP Singh in the 1960 bypoll after the demise of Feroze Gandhi, and by another Congress leader Baij Nath Kureel in 1962.

Amid criticism that the Congress had given a walkout to Irani in Amethi, sources said, the party in its wisdom believed that Rae Bareli's historical, emotional and electoral importance for the Gandhi family was higher than that of Amethi.

Congress candidate from Rae Bareli constituency Rahul Gandhi performs a 'puja' after filing his nomination for Lok Sabha elections, in Rae Bareli. **PHOTO: PTI**

In her farewell message to the people of Rae Bareli, Sonia Gandhi had expressed confidence that the seat which always stood by her and the Gandhis will continue to support her family in future also.

In the message on 15 February, former party chief Sonia Gandhi informed voters of her Rae Bareli constituency that she will not contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls due to health and age issues. —*PTI*

Guj Cong man calls Gandhi cunning; BJP slams party

RAJKOT, 3 MAY

- Rajguru later claimed he meant to say Gandhiji was "clever", Gujarat BJP vice president Bharat Boghara said people will not forgive Congress

Former Gujarat Congress MLA Indranil Rajguru courted controversy by using the term "cunning" for Gandhiji and also claimed Rahul Gandhi was better than the Mahatma as he was "pure hearted and frank".

While Rajguru later claimed he meant to say Gandhiji was "clever", Gujarat BJP vice president Bharat Boghara said people will not forgive the Congress for such comments on the Mahatma.

In a video that went viral on social media, Rajguru, a former legislator from Rajkot who was addressing a small gathering on Dudhsagar road here on 1 May, also said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was pure hearted and frank and that people would see the next Mahatma in him.

People have tried hard to portray Rahul Gandhi as a "pappu" (street lingo for dimwitted) but the country has accepted him as its leader, he further claimed in the video.

Hitting out at Rajguru, Gujarat BJP vice president Bharat Boghara said people will not forgive the Congress for such remarks against Mahatma Gandhi.Asked about the issue by the media, Rajguru claimed what he said had been mentioned in history books."Today, the BJP is working like the British and is trying to destroy democracy. It is only Rahul Gandhi who is fighting against the BJP just like Mahatma Gandhi took on the British," he said. —*PTI*

Shah video row : 5 T'gana Congress workers held by cops, out on bail

HYDERABAD, 3 MAY

The city police on Friday said they arrested five Telangana Congress party social media activists in connection with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's alleged morphed video that went viral recently.

The accused were produced before a local court which granted them bail with a condition that each person will have to submit two sureties worth Rs 10,000 each and appear before the investigating officer on Monday and Friday till further orders.

The Delhi Police on Friday arrested a Congress member for allegedly uploading and circulating a fake video of Shah, an official said here.

According to a statement issued by the police, they received a complaint on 27 April from a state BJP leader alleging that the Telangana Congress Pradesh Congress Party on its X account posted morphed or fabricated video of Amit Shah's speech during his election campaign and public meeting at Siddipet recently, in violation of IT Act.

Amit Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

- AThe accused were produced before a local court which granted them bail with a condition that each person will have to submit two sureties worth Rs 10,000 each

The deliberate and mischievous act of morphing the video is aimed at misleading people and voters creating fear amongst the OBC communities, the police said, adding they registered a case under Sections 469 (forgery), 505(1)C (circulating rumour), 171G (spreading false information), among others.

According to police, on 23 April, during a public meeting in Medak, Amit Shah made a speech.

The A1 received a morphed video and uploaded it on the "@INCTelangana" handle on X besides sharing it on various WhatsApp groups while A2 to A5 saw the video and further shared it to their individual X handles. —*PTI*

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

'HINDUS ARE SECOND CLASS CITIZENS IN WB'

BARDHAMAN, 3 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flayed the TMC in West Bengal, alleging that it turned Hindus into second-class citizens in the state, where the party "indulges in corruption and politics of appeasement".

Addressing back-to-back election rallies at Bardhaman-Durgapur and Krishnanagar, Modi also criticised the Trinamool Congress for its "apathy" towards the victims in Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas, where allegations of sexual abuse against leaders of the ruling party have surfaced.

"The state government, due to its appeasement politics, didn't touch the main accused in the Sandeshkhali case as his name is Shajahan Sheikh. So many atrocities were committed against women there, and the entire country wanted punishment for the culprits. But, the TMC kept protecting the main accused till the end," he said.

"Why have Hindus become second-class citizens in Bengal... An MLA of TMC gave a statement recently that they will throw Hindus in the Bhagirathi River. What kind of politics is this? Is appeasement more important than humanity for the TMC?" said Modi, referring to the reported remarks of TMC MLA Humayun Kabir in Murshidabad district. —*PTI*

SC refuses to entertain plea on 'namesake' candidates in polls

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea that sought a direction to the Election Commission (EC) to take urgent steps for an effective mechanism to solve the issue of "namesake" candidates contesting polls.

After a bench headed by Justice BR Gavai showed disinclination to entertain the plea, the petitioner's counsel sought permission to withdraw it.

The bench, also comprising Justices Satish Chandra Sharma and Sandeep Mehta, allowed the petition to be withdrawn.

PHOTO: PTI

Describing the issue as "extremely serious", Biju had referred to Rule 22(3) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, which says if two or more candidates bear the same name, they shall be distinguished by the addition of their occupation or residence or in some other manner.

The plea said the "wrong practice of fielding 'namesake' candidates is an old trick to create confusion in the minds of voters".

It said such a practice is required to be curtailed on a war-footing since "each and every vote" has its power to decide a candidate's future.

It claimed that the "namesake" candidates may not have any knowledge and awareness about the political and administrative systems in India and they are getting "sponsorships" from rival political parties, including money, materials and other offers. —*PTI*

Senior CPI leader Atul Anjaan dies due to cancer

LUCKNOW 3 MAY

National secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI) Atul Kumar Anjaan died in hospital on Friday morning. He was 70. According to his sister Ratna Singh, Anjaan had been suffering from cancer for several years and had earlier undergone treatment in Delhi.

He was being treated at a hospital in the Uttar Pradesh capital, she said, adding that he will be cremated in the afternoon.

Anjaan began his political career at the Lucknow University Students Union (LUSU) in 1977.

Atul Kumar Anjaan **PHOTO: PTI**

Leaders of several political parties and social workers expressed grief over his death.

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait remembered Anjaan as someone who fought for the interests of farmers. —*PTI*

EXCISE POLICY SCAM

HC asks CBI, ED to react to Sisodia's bail

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Delhi High Court sought the response of the CBI and ED on Friday on former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's pleas seeking bail in the corruption and money-laundering cases lodged by the agencies in relation to the alleged excise policy scam.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma issued notices to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sisodia's pleas challenging a trial court's 30 April order by which his bail petitions were dismissed.The High Court listed the matter for further hearing on 8 May. Sisodia's lawyers said an application has also been filed seeking an interim relief for the continuation of the trial court's order allowing him to meet his ailing wife once a week in custody during the pendency of his bail pleas.As the counsel for the ED submitted that the agency has no objection if the trial court order is continued, the judge allowed the request. — *PTI*

Manish Sisodia **PHOTO: PTI**

ED wanted to arrest Kejri, Shah revealed in interview: Atishi

New Delhi, 3 May

Aam Aadmi Party claimed that Amit Shah in an interview made it clear that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was arrested by ED under a conspiracy, on Friday. Addressing a press conference, party leader Atishi alleged that Union Home Minister Shah in an interview with a news channel made it clear that Enforcement Directorate intended to arrest Kejriwal from the very first time it sent him a summons. "Since the day Kejriwal started getting ED summons, AAP openly said that this was a conspiracy to arrest him," Atishi said. —*PTI*

Didi lashes out at Guv for 'misconduct' with woman

KOLKATA, 3 MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Friday lashed out at Governor CV Ananda Bose for his alleged misconduct with a woman employee of Raj Bhavan.

Speaking at a public rally in Purba Bardhaman district, Banerjee said my heart bleeds for the woman molested at Raj Bhavan and termed it a shame.

"Yesterday, a young woman who worked at Raj Bhavan came out and spoke against the Governor's harassment... Yesterday, the tears of the woman broke my heart. I have seen her video testimony. Before talking about Sandeshkhali, BJP must answer why the Governor did this to a woman working at Raj Bhavan," she said.

Mamata Banerjee **PHOTO: PTI**

Banerjee also wondered why "Prime Minister Narendra Modi who came to Raj Bhawan last night didn't speak a word on the issue.""The woman cried and walked out saying she was too scared to work at Raj Bhavan anymore. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Encounter between security forces and Naxalites in Sukma

SUKMA, 3 MAY

An encounter broke out between security forces and Naxalites in the core area of the battalion in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh, on Friday morning, officials said.According to officials, the exchange of gunfire between security forces and Naxalites occurred two to three times since morning, but all soldiers remain safe and secure. The District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Cobra soldiers were conducting an anti-Naxal operation in the Raigudam area. A large quantity of weapons, ammunition, and explosives, including an AK-47, were recovered from the encounter site, according to a top police official. "A joint team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF) was conducting an anti-Naxal operation on Monday night. *—ANI*

11-year-old dies during physical activity at school

RAMGARH, 3 MAY

An 11-year-old student of a residential school died allegedly during physical activity on school ground in Jharkhand's Ramgarh district on Friday morning, an official said. Ramgarh sub-divisional officer (SDO), Ashish Gangwar, told PTI that a probe order has been issued into the death of a class-5 student, identified as Aryan Kumar. The incident happened at Radha Govind Residential School in Jara Basti of the district when the student came to the school ground to take part in routine physical activity. "The student, who hailed from Basantpur under Mandu block of the district, suddenly fell on the ground during the activity. He was taken to Sadar hospital where doctors declared him brought dead," said BN Sah, chairman of the institution. *—PTI*

Salman firing case: Autopsy confirms accused's hanging

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

The post mortem report of Anuj Thapan, an accused in the 14 April firing incident outside the Bandra house of actor Salman Khan, confirmed he died of hanging as there are ligature marks on the neck and signs of asphyxia, a Mumbai police official said on Friday. Thapan, who was held from Punjab along with his associate Sonu Bishnoi on 26 April and is accused of supplying firearms and bullets for the firing incident, was found dead in the lock-up of the Crime Branch in the commissionerate complex at Crawford Market on Wednesday. He had allegedly hanged himself with a bed sheet in the toilet of the lock-up, as per police. "The post mortem was conducted on Thursday evening in state-run JJ Hospital in Byculla. As per the report, there are ligature marks on the neck and signs of asphyxia, all of which confirm that he died of hanging," the police official said *—PTI*

Hurriyat chairman placed under house arrest

SRINAGAR, 3 MAY

Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was on Friday placed under house arrest and not allowed to offer congregational prayers at the Jamia Masjid here, the managing body of the grand mosque said. In a statement, Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid said its president "has been again placed under house arrest at his residence this morning by the authorities". "He was not allowed to address the faithful at the Jamia Masjid, Srinagar, nor offer obligatory Friday prayers," the statement said.The Auqaf expressed dismay at Mirwaiz's "repeated house detention." *—PTI*

Here are 3 factors causing heatwave in many states

Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal have been experiencing heatwaves

ODISHA, 3 MAY

Moisture levels in many parts of India are much higher than normal. States like Odisha and West Bengal are even experiencing humid heatwaves, which have made living conditions unbearable for residents.

This is happening because of moisture being pumped in by multiple weather systems over the country, further fuelled by warming of the atmosphere and the oceans.

Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal have been experiencing heatwave conditions since 15 and 17 April, respectively, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Interior Karnataka has been hit by heatwaves since 23 April.

The sub-Himalayan parts of West Bengal also started suffering from heatwaves since 24 April, along with the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. Rare heatwaves started affecting Kerala on 26 April, along with Bihar. Anti cyclones are common over India during the pre-monsoon period, according to Ramesh. "These winds are pumping moisture from the sea onto land, increasing the relative humidity levels even in the interior regions."

A pedestrian holds an umbrella for protection against the scorching sun on a hot summer day, in Kolkata, on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

The anticyclone over the Arabian Sea is still causing rainfall in West Asia, according to Ramesh. The region suffered unprecedented rainfall and flooding in mid-April fuelled by warming.

In northern and western India, along with the anticyclone over the Arabian Sea, moisture is also being brought in by the continuous western disturbances. These extra tropical storm systems travel from the Mediterranean region through Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan to bring most of northern, western and central India's winter rainfall and cause thunderstorms during the spring and summer seasons.

But global warming and consequent climate change have been changing the character of these western disturbances, increasing their frequency towards the spring and summers and causing them to move more towards the southern latitudes.

—Courtesy Downtoearth

Unnatural sex by a man with wife not rape: MP HC

MADHYA PRADESH, 3 MAY

Noting that 'Marital rape' has not been recognised as an offence in India, the Madhya Pradesh High Court has observed that any sexual intercourse, including unnatural sex by a man with a wife, won't amount to rape as the consent of the wife becomes immaterial in such cases.

A bench of Justice Gurpal Singh Ahluwalia held that if a wife is residing with her husband during the subsistence of a valid marriage, then any sexual intercourse or sexual act by a man with his own wife not below the age of fifteen years will not be rape.

The Court, however, added that the only exception to this position of law is Section 376-B of IPC, where the sexual act with his own wife during the separate living on account of judicial separation or otherwise would be rape.

Referring to Exception 2 of Section 375, the Court noted that sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own

wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, will not amount to rape.

The Court made these observations while quashing an FIR lodged against one Manish Sahu by his wife alleging, inter alia, a commission of unnatural offence as per Section 377 of IPC.

Importantly, as per Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), rape includes all forms of sexual assault involving non-consensual intercourse with a woman. However, as per Exception 2 to Section 375 IPC, sexual intercourse between a husband and a wife aged over 15 years of age does not constitute "rape" and thus prevents such acts from prosecution.

— Courtesy, Live Law

After a 40-minute search revealed nothing suspicious, the train resumed its journey at 9.40am *PHOTO: INDIAN RAILWAYS*

Train in Bhopal searched after suspicious object spotted

BHOPAL, 3 MAY

A Jammu-bound train was searched for 40 minutes at Rani Kamalapti station in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal on Friday morning after one of the passengers claimed that there was a suspicious object onboard, an official of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) said.

The Pune-Jammu Tawi Jhelum Express was searched at Rani Kamalapati station around 9 am, but the information turned out to be a hoax, RPF commandant Prashant Yadav said.

One of the passengers onboard the train informed the ticket checker about the presence of a suspicious object, following which the train was halted at Rani Kamalapati station, he said.

However, nothing suspicious was found during the search, which lasted for about 40 minutes, and the train left for its destination at 9.40, the official said.

The passenger is being interrogated, he added. *—PTI*

SC asks Centre to furnish data on arrests done under GST Act

NEW DELHI, MAY 3

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to furnish details of issuance of notices and arrests done under the provisions of the Goods and Services Tax, saying it may interpret the law and lay down appropriate guidelines to avoid any harassment of citizens by depriving their liberty.

A special bench of Justices Sanjeev Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, which is hearing a batch of 281 petitions challenging various provisions of the GST Act, Customs Act and the provisions of PMLA, voiced concern over the ambiguity in section 69 of the GST Act that deals with the powers of arrest.The bench said it would interpret the law to "strengthen" the liberty, if need be, but not allow citizens to be harassed. The ASG told the bench on 9 May, he would try to answer the court's queries, when the matter will be heard next. *—PTI*

ED ATTACHES RS 205 CR ASSETS IN LIQUOR SCAMS

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said it has attached assets worth over Rs 205 crore of retired Chhattisgarh IAS officer Anil Tuteja, the elder brother of the Raipur Mayor and some others in a money laundering probe linked to an alleged liquor scam in the state.

The attached properties include 14 assets of Tuteja worth Rs 15.82 crore, 115 properties of Anwar Dhebar, the elder brother of Raipur Mayor and Congress leader Aijaz Dhebar, worth of Rs 116.16 crore, properties in respect of Vikash Agarwal alias Subbu worth Rs 1.54 crore and 33 properties in respect of Arvind Singh worth Rs 12.99 crore, the agency said in a statement.

The attached properties of Anwar Dhebar include Hotel Vennington Court, Raipur that is being run under the aegis of his firm, A Dhebar Buildcon and a commercial building in the name of "Accord Business Tower", the ED said.

The total value of the attached assets is 205.49 crore.

Tuteja was arrested in this case recently by the ED where it had alleged that the commission generated through illegal sale of liquor was shared " *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

HC orders relocation of Ghazipur, Bhalswa dairies from landfill sites

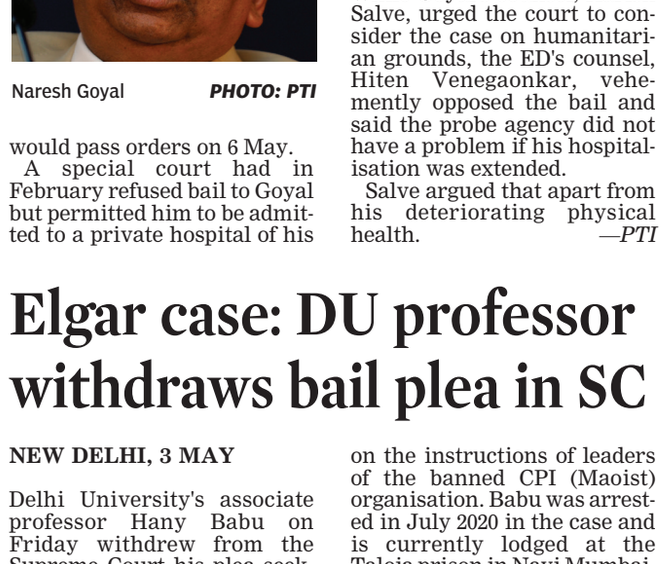
NEW DELHI , 3 MAY

The Delhi High Court has viewed that there is an urgent need to rehabilitate and relocate the Ghazipur Dairy and Bhalswa Dairy, as they are situated adjacent to the Sanitary Landfill Sites ('SLFS'). The court said that the dairies should be moved to areas where proper sewage, drainage, biogas plants, ample open space for the cattle to move around, and sufficient grazing areas are available.

Keeping in view the apprehension that dairies next to the landfill sites can cause illness and public health hazards, the court is prima facie of the view that these dairies need to be relocated forthwith, the Delhi HC said while hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on Friday.

The bench, led by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan observed that cattle in the dairies situated next to the landfill sites without doubt would feed on hazardous waste and their milk, if consumed by humans, particularly children, (directly or indirectly) could have serious consequences.

The court further said that before issuing any binding direction, it would like to hear from the concerned officials as to how these directions should be implemented. For this purpose, the Commissioner (MCD), Director of Veterinary (MCD), Chief Secretary (GNCTD), CEO (DUSIB) and CEO (FSSAI) are directed to join the proceedings through an audio-video link on the next date of hearing. *—ANI*



Ragpickers collects reusable items from a pile of garbage at a dumping site, on the eve of World Environment Day at Ghazipur *PHOTO: PTI*

ED denies interim bail to Naresh Goyal

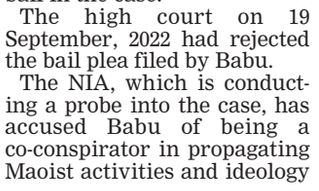
MUMBAI, 3 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday opposed the interim medical bail sought by Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal in a money laundering case and said his stay at a private hospital could be extended for a month.

Goyal has sought interim bail on medical and humanitarian grounds, citing that both he and his wife, Anita Goyal, suffered from cancer.

On Friday, a single bench of Justice NJ Jamadar said it would pass orders on 6 May.

A special court had in February refused bail to Goyal but permitted him to be admitted to a private hospital of his choice.



Naresh Goyal *PHOTO: PTI*

Goyal had last week moved the High Court seeking interim bail on merits and release on medical grounds. While Goyal's counsel, Harish Salve, urged the court to consider the case on humanitarian grounds, the ED's counsel, Hiten Venegaonkar, vehemently opposed the bail and said the probe agency did not have a problem if his hospitalisation was extended.

Salve argued that apart from his deteriorating physical health. *—PTI*

KANPUR IN TROUBLE

Pollution, encroachment mar Ganga

NEW DELHI, 2MAY

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), while hearing a recent case, has remarked that the Ganga's floodplain at Sarjupurba, downstream of Ranighat in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur district, is being illegally encroached in direct contravention of its 2017 order.

Not just that, garbage, polythene and sewage is being discharged into the river, the bench of NGT Chairman and Justice Prakash Srivastava stated on 22 April, 2024.

The bench, after perusing the report filed by the Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Department on February 10 this year, said the latitude and longitude provided by the Central Water Commission at the concerned place has not been marked as a 'No Development Zone' and 'No Construction or Regulatory Zone'. The bench said certain construction permissions have been granted in the regulatory zone, including keeping the plinth level above the floodplain and constructing the roof and first storey keeping in mind the flood level of 100 years. Such permission is prima facie not in accordance with the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authority Order, 2016 and the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authority.

Garbage and sewage is being discharged into the river *PHOTO: PTI*

The bench said the demarcation of 'No Development Zone' and 'No Construction or Regulatory Zone' should be done as per the 2016 order. At present, the Uttar Pradesh Council has sought three weeks' time to file a reply in this matter. *—Downtoearth*

UN ASSEMBLY STORIES

India slams Pak, says it has dubious track record

UNITED NATIONS, 3 MAY

In a retort, India has said Pakistan harbours a "most dubious track record" on all aspects, as it slammed "destructive and pernicious" remarks made by Islamabad's envoy in the UN General Assembly.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj's stern response came after Pakistan's UN envoy Munir Akram made lengthy remarks against India, including references to Kashmir, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, during his address to the UN General Assembly meeting on 'Culture of Peace.'

"One final point...in this Assembly, as we endeavour to cultivate a culture of peace amid these challenging times, our focus remains steadfast on constructive dialogue. We thus choose to set aside the remarks from a certain delegation, which not only lack decorum but also detract from our collective efforts due to their destructive and pernicious nature," Kamboj said on Thursday.

"We would strongly encourage that delegation to align with the central principles of respect and diplomacy that must always guide our discussions. Or is that too much to ask of a country that harbours a most dubious track record on all aspects in itself?" she said.

Kamboj asserted that terrorism stands in direct opposition to the culture of peace and the core teachings of all religions, which advocate compassion, understanding and coexistence.

Ruchira Kamboj *PHOTO: ANI*

"One final point...in this Assembly, as we endeavour to cultivate a culture of peace amid these challenging times, our focus remains steadfast on constructive dialogue. We thus choose to set aside the remarks from a certain delegation, which not only lack decorum but also detract from our collective efforts due to their destructive and pernicious nature

-Ruchira Kamboj

Kamboj further said "We are particularly concerned by the escalating attacks on sacred sites, including churches, monasteries, gurudwaras, mosques, temples and synagogues," she said, adding that such acts require a swift and united response from the global community.

"It is crucial that our discussions therefore forthrightly address these issues, resisting political expediencies."

India commended Bangladesh for presenting the resolution 'Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace', which Delhi "proudly" co-sponsored. *—PTI*

Elgar case: DU professor withdraws bail plea in SC

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Delhi University's associate professor Hany Babu on Friday withdrew from the Supreme Court his plea seeking bail in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

A bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal took note of the submission of the lawyer appearing for Babu, who said five other co-accused have been granted bail in the case.

The high court on 19 September, 2022 had rejected the bail plea filed by Babu.

The NIA, which is conducting a probe into the case, has accused Babu of being a co-conspirator in propagating Maoist activities and ideology on the instructions of leaders of the banned CPI (Maoist) organisation. Babu was arrested in July 2020 in the case and is currently lodged at the Taloja prison in Navi Mumbai.

The case relates to alleged inflammatory speeches delivered at the Elgar Parishad conclave, held in Shaniwarwada in Pune on 31 December, 2017, which police claimed triggered violence the next day near the Koregaon Bhima war memorial located on the city's outskirts. One person was killed and several others were injured in the violence.

The NIA had opposed the bail plea, arguing Babu actively participated in activities to promote Naxalism. *—PTI*

COMING APART

Handloom weavers of the famous Dharmavaram pure silk sarees in Andhra Pradesh struggle to survive in the absence of enough government support, in Sri Sathya Sai district
PHOTO: PTI

One year on: Manipur stays divided, people pulled apart

Pictures of victims who lost their lives in the conflict are put up on a wall in Manipur village ***PHOTO: PTI***

I Manipuris can point to the day their homeland became a state divided and society was pulled apart, separating families and neighbours who had lived together for generations and upending thousands of lives. It was exactly a year ago.

3 May, 2023. The date is imprinted on the collective memory of an entire people who mark the day two Manipurs came into being, divided as it were by a virtual line of control. That was the day a 'Tribal Solidarity March' organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status led to ethnic clashes between the Meitei and the Kuki communities.

The conflict, which has impacted everyday life in myriad ways, has claimed more than 200 lives and displaced many thousands.

The three main ethnic groups in the northeast state have historically clustered in different parts of the state's geography - the Meiteis in the valley, the Kukis in the southern hills and the Nagas in the northern hills. But there has never been an absolute, hostile segregation of the communities. Until last May.

Now, the Meiteis population is concentrated in Imphal Valley and the Kukis have shifted to the hills.

Nothing illustrates the state's deep ethnic fault lines better than the bordering areas dividing the plain and hill districts.

Concertina coils, armoured vehicles, armed security personnel, sandbag bunkers... The checkpoints, be it at the border between Bishnupur and Kuki dominated Churachandpur, or Meitei controlled Imphal West and Kuki 'area' Kangpokpi, almost resemble boundaries between hostile nations. The conflict has segregated not just civil society but also police personnel and government officials.

Police personnel and those from forces belonging to either the Meitei or the Kuki communities are also confined to their respective areas and cannot commute to the other side.

Keeping vigil at these checkpoints are not just the forces but a battery of "village volunteers" mostly in their 20s and early 30s who claim to have taken up arms to ensure their families remain safe.

While the travel from hills to the Valley and vice-versa is restricted for people from the other community, non Kuki and non Meitei people are able to travel provided they pass certain checks.

For every such check, the outsiders, essentially government officials and press, have to rely on an aide who is either a Naga or a Muslim.

This PTI reporter travelled to Churachandpur and was stopped at four checkpoints. At each, volunteers asked who I was going to meet. Details, copy of the ID and local address were taken down meticulously.

Nagas and Muslims commuting between the two areas are mandated by the volunteers to make a donation, irrespective of the amount.

The continuing tensions have a ripple effect, affecting people in ways big and small.

With facilities in Imphal out of reach, people from Churachandpur have been travelling to Aizawl - a journey of over 12 hours - for a variety of reasons, including medical needs that cannot be met in the Churachandpur district hospital.

The process to catch a flight is similar as the Imphal airport remains out of bound for the Kukis. Groceries for relief camps in Churachandpur are also transported to Churachandpur through the same route.

College students that stayed back in Churachandpur rather than seek a transfer to universities outside the state, an option provided by the University Grants Commission (UGC), have to deposit their answer sheets in sealed envelopes at the District Commissioner's Office; their fingers crossed their papers will be marked and not get lost.

The DC office in tandem with Assam Rifles sends these envelopes to colleges in the Valley in helicopters.

Meiteis, who account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population, displaced from the hills and now living in relief camps have their own issues. Their houses no longer exist.

"It takes decades to build a life, a house, livelihood... everything is gone. We just keep getting to know from our previous neighbours who are Nagas that our house is no longer there," said Sim Khang, a Meitei who used to run a transport business in Churachandpur.

While over 4,200 weapons looted from the armouries in the violence-hit state continue to be untraceable, seeing young men with weapons is a common site in the fringe areas.

Congress nominee from Inner Manipur and JNU professor Bimol Akoijam equated the violence in Manipur to "Rwanda-like ethnic conflict", saying separating Kukis and Meiteis geographically in violence-hit Manipur in the name of safety is against the "very idea" of India.

BJP nominee from the seat and state Law Minister Basanta Kumar Singh, said his party does not endorse the segregation and stands for a "United Manipur".

The sitting MP from the area, which voted on April 19, is BJP's Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, also a minister of state in the Union government.

According to officials, more than 50,000 people are still living in camps following unrest.

As politicians chart their agenda, they wait for some semblance of calm and quiet to return to their lives along with thousands of others.

—PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Toxic contamination in Kochi backwaters poses health risk

Heavy pollution from industries in Greater Kochi is getting into the water, which is then getting into fish and shellfish, making them dangerous to eat because they have harmful metals, according to a new study.

The study by the Department of Marine Technology, Cochin University for Science and Technology (CUSAT), and the National Centre for Coastal Research, NIOT Campus, Chennai, revealed heavy metal contamination in various species of fish and shellfish in the Cochin Estuarine System (CES) in backwaters from Aroor in Ernakulam-Alappuzha border to Eloor, the industrial belt of Kochi.

The report published in the international science journal Springer said that at least three metals, zinc, cadmium, and chromium, exceeded the toxicity threshold outlined in the sediment quality guidelines, and cadmium and lead exceeded the standards of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

The presence of cadmium in the muscle tissues of fish and shellfish considerably increases the cancer risk in humans.

"The carcinogenic risk index indicates that cadmium may lead consumers to a chronic cancer risk," the report said.

All the dissolved metals in the backwaters in Kochi showed higher concentrations compared to all other estuaries in the world, the report said.

However, the people of Ernakulam and Alappuzha districts, who are major consumers of the catch from the backwater, can breathe easy now as the study revealed that the estimated daily intake is very low compared to the permissible intake limits, and thus the potential health hazard from most of these metals were found to be low.

But the study, titled 'Bioaccumulation of heavy metals in seafood resources from the southwest coast of India: human health risk assessment and importance of seafood security', pointed towards possible long-term risks, especially due to the intake of metals like cadmium and lead.

It also urges the administration to take immediate steps to prevent contamination of the water resources in the Cochin backwaters.

The water resources in Kochi, the commercial and industrial hub of Kerala, face increasing pressure from commercial and industrial activities, with approximately 95 per cent of red-category industries concentrated in Greater Kochi, located within the northern side of the estuary.

Furthermore, contaminants from the adjoining Periyar River exacerbate coastal water pollution, posing a threat to fishery resources and other marine life.

According to a study by the NGO Greenpeace in 2003, the lower Periyar has been described as a cesspool of toxins with alarming levels of heavy metal pollution. Various studies have underscored the severity of heavy metal pollution in the water and sediment of this area, according to the report.

The Cochin Estuarine System stands out as one of the largest estuarine systems, which sustains exceptional biodiversity and functions as a crucial breeding and nursery habitat for diverse fish and shellfish species.

It constitutes the northern segment of the Vembanad estuary, designated as a Ramsar site in India, with an annual fish landing of 3906.33 tons. Fishing has been a vital source of livelihood for the residents along the estuary.

But, the contamination of the water resources in the area is posing a greater health risk to the people, as the bioaccumulation of heavy metals in fish has almost reached its threshold level.

According to the study, the heavy metal zinc is most consumed, followed by copper, magnesium, nickel, chromium, lead, and cadmium in fish and shellfish.

For the analysis, the study sourced all the study materials from the commercial fisheries catch in the area, representing native edible species with high consumer demand in Kerala.

The study, which divided the Cochin Estuarine System into three zones, found that the northern zone has the highest metal accumulation compared to the central and southern zones.

This aligns with previous findings of elevated metal concentrations in sediment and water on the northern side of the estuary, the study said.

The presence of heavy metals in fish tissues was higher during the pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods. The contamination was reduced during the monsoon season.

During the monsoon season, substantial rainfall and an increase in the water flow reduced the metal concentration in backwaters and rivers, the study said.

—PTI

The presence of cadmium in the muscle tissues of fish and shellfish considerably increases the cancer risk in humans ***PHOTO: PTI***

Drought grips Kodagu: Cauvery runs dry, wildlife in danger

Karnataka recently saw its capital city come close to a Day Zero. Now, another well-known area of the State is staring at acute water scarcity. Southern Karnataka's Kodagu district, famous for its coffee estates, is facing an unprecedented drought.

Once characterised by six months of continuous rainfall, the district — home to Talakaveri, the origin of the iconic Cauvery river — now faces a grim reality as the river has dwindled to a trickle, leaving behind parched landscapes. This has dire consequences for human settlements, coffee crops as well as wildlife.

'Ganga of southern India' presented a stark image of desolation at Dubare, a renowned farming camp nestled in Kushalanagar taluk.

The riverbed, once full to the brim, is now littered with exposed rocks that are emblematic of the Cauvery's diminished State.

Dubare breeding centre's resident elephants, reliant on the river for sustenance, now grapple with scarcity as their thirst remains unquenched.

The absence of water has not only deprived wildlife of essential resources but also disrupted livelihoods dependent on the river's vitality. Tourists, once drawn to the allure of elephant baths and river adventures, are now witness to a stark reality where rafting businesses languish, boat operators idle and guides struggle to eke out a living.

For coffee farmers, the backbone of Kodagu's economy, the drought poses a dual threat. While the scorching sun accelerates coffee blossoms, the absence of rain spells doom for the crop, leaving farmers grappling with uncertainty and apprehension over potential losses in the coming year.

Concerns reverberate among locals and visitors, lamenting the drastic transformation witnessed firsthand. Once a symbol of abundance and vitality, the Cauvery now stands as a testament to the looming crisis, prompting fears of what the future holds as the drought intensifies with each passing day.

According to records from the district groundwater office, borewell groundwater levels plummeted to 15.7 metres (m) in 2023, from 13.4 m in 2014. A minor improvement was noted at 12.9 m in 2018.

Similarly, the groundwater level in dug wells exhibited a downward trajectory, decreasing to 6.7 m from 6 m during the same period, with a temporary upturn observed at 5.8 m in 2021.

The absence of water has not only deprived wildlife, but also disrupted livelihoods ***PHOTO: DTE***

Concerned activists attributed the water crisis in Kodagu to various factors, including rapid urbanisation, excessive exploitation of water sources, and altered rainfall patterns attributed to climate change.

Environmental advocates have urged the adoption of a catchment area conservation policy to protect the region's essential river catchments. They advocate stringent measures, including limitations on land conversion, controls on urban expansion, and regulation of tourism activities, to safeguard Kodagu's delicate ecology.

Smelling the coffee

The district boasts nearly 30 per cent of India's coffee production, with an approximate production of 120,000 tonnes. But it is now reeling under problems. The blossom showers, which are a lifeline for coffee during March and April, have not been received by many villages in the district. The coffee plants are drying up.

Chammatira Pravin Uthappa, a small coffee grower in Ponnampet, said that coffee estate owners are facing hardships they have not seen in decades. He said, "If the plants dry, we have to plant new saplings. They take at least another five years to crop."

The growers were already in distress due to a shortage of labourers and increased production costs. But the drought made matters worse.

"We are suffering from depredations by wild elephant herds. Now, if drought also affects us, we will be on the streets," Uthappa added.

He pointed out that the increased commercialisation of the district has also contributed to the drought. The lush greenery is being converted into homestays and resorts to attract tourists. Unscientific excavation is a major challenge for the district environment, Uthappa added.

Meanwhile, the Kodava National Council (CNC) has flagged the proposed conversion of approximately 2,400 acres of coffee estates near Siddapur in Kodagu district into housing layouts.

CNC has denounced the move as detrimental to the region's ecological integrity and cultural heritage. The committee has called for an immediate halt to such large-scale land conversions and stringent action against those involved in the alleged malpractice in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers, and state authorities.

The sprawling Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation coffee estate, situated in close proximity to the Cauvery basin, stands poised for transformation into residential enclaves, signalling the loss of invaluable green cover and exacerbating concerns over environmental degradation.

CNC President NU Nachappa underscored the grave repercussions of rampant urbanisation on the fragile ecosystem of the Cauvery basin. The proposed conversion, he said, not only jeopardises the natural habitat but also exacerbates the looming water scarcity crisis, threatening the very existence of ancient streams and Cauvery and its tributaries.

He drew attention to a similar encroachment near the revered Iggutappa temple in Kakkabe, in Madikeri , where an additional 300 acres are slated for conversion into residential plots.

—Courtesy Downtoearth

PHOTO: X/@ABaerbock

Germany warns of consequences for Russian cyberattack

SYDNEY, 3 MAY

German's top diplomat on Friday said Russia will face consequences after accusing its military intelligence service of masterminding an "absolutely intolerable" cyberattack. Relations between the two European countries were already tense, with Germany providing military support to Ukraine in its ongoing war with Russia. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Russian state hackers were behind a cyberattack last year that targeted the Social Democrats, the leading party in the governing coalition. "Russian state hackers attacked Germany in cyberspace," she said at a news conference in Adelaide. Baerbock is visiting Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, with the trip focusing on security policy. *—PTI*

Taiwan detects 26 Chinese aircraft, 5 naval vessels

TAIPEI, 3 MAY

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) on Friday said that it detected 26 Chinese military aircraft and five naval vessels operating around the nation from 6 am (local time) on Thursday and 6 am on Friday. Among the 26 People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, 14 aircraft crossed the Taiwan Strait median line, Taiwan's MND said. Two Chinese military aircraft were spotted in the northeast sector of Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) and three other fighters entered the southwest ADIZ, Taiwan News reported. Following China's action, Taiwan monitored the situation using its intelligence and reconnaissance systems and deployed combat patrol aircraft, naval vessels and land-based air defence missile systems. *—ANI*

Denmark to liberalise its abortion law

COPENHAGEN, 3 MAY

Denmark's government said Friday it is relaxing its restrictions on abortion for the first time in 50 years to make it legal for women to terminate pregnancies up to the 18th week from the previous 12th week. Officials said the law will also be changed to allow girls between 15 and 17 years old to have an abortion without parental consent. Marie Bjerre, the Gender Equality Minister, said Denmark is strengthening women's rights while they are being rolled back in other parts of the world. Limit was set at up to 12 weeks because "at that time abortions were performed surgically, and an abortion after the 12th week entailed a greater risk of complications," the ministry said. *—PTI*

Maui sues cell carriers over wildfire alerts

HONOLULU, 3 MAY

Had emergency responders known about widespread cellphone outages during the height of last summer's deadly Maui wildfires, they would have used other methods to warn about the disaster, county officials said in a lawsuit. Alerts the county sent to cellphones warning people to immediately evacuate were never received, unbeknownst to the county, the lawsuit said. Maui officials failed to activate sirens that would have warned the entire population of the approaching flames. That has raised questions about whether everything was done to alert the public in a state that possesses an elaborate emergency warning system for a variety of dangers including wars and wildfires. Cellular carriers were negligent in failing to properly inform Maui police of widespread service outages. *—PTI*

Sunak under pressure amid dire local poll results

Labour party took control of local authorities in the region

LONDON, 3 MAY

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's leadership is under severe pressure on Friday as the results of local elections and a crucial by-election poured in overnight, delivering what is being characterised as one of the worst poll outcomes for the governing Conservative Party in 40 years.

Rebels from within his party are expected to renew their attacks on the British Indian leader after the Opposition Labour Party made definitive gains, including overturning the Tory majority in the Blackpool South by-election which was necessitated following a resignation amid a lobbying row. Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer declared the result as a "seismic" victory and an overall poll verdict in favour of the party as it comes on the eve of a general election, expected later this year.

PHOTO: PTI

"Blackpool speaks for the whole country... This is the one contest where voters had the chance to send a message to Rishi Sunak's Conservatives directly, and that message is an overwhelming vote for change," said Starmer of the by-election.

The results will continue to pour in over the weekend, with the overall picture expected to be clear by Sunday. But the early indications are that Labour has taken control of a number of local authorities in the regions . *—PTI*

ESPECIALLY HOMES

Gaza destruction worse than WW II: UN

The UN assessment said the social and economic impact of the war has been increasing "in an exponential manner." PHOTO: X/@WHLT22

UNITED NATIONS, 3 MAY

The world hasn't seen anything like the unprecedented destruction of housing in Gaza since World War II, and it would take at least until 2040 to restore the homes devastated in Israel's bombing and ground offensive if the conflict ended today, the United Nations (UN) reported on Thursday.

The UN assessment said the social and economic impact of the war launched after Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel on 7 October has been increasing "in an exponential manner."

It called the level of casualties – 5 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million population -- "unprecedented" in such a short time. By mid-April, it said, over 33,000 Palestinians had been killed and more than 80,000 injured. About 7,000 others remain missing, most believed to be buried under the rubble.

"Every additional day that this war continues is exacting huge and compounding costs to Gazans and all Palestinians" said United Nations Development Program Administrator Achim Steiner.

The report by UNDP and the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia paints a dire picture of the struggle to survive in Gaza where 201,000 jobs have been lost since the war began and the economy contracted 81 per cent in the last quarter of 2023. Gaza has been under blockade by Israel and Egypt since Hamas' 2007 takeover, putting tight controls on what enters and exits the territory. Even before the war, it faced "hyper-unemployment" of 45 per cent, reaching nearly 63 per cent among younger workers. At least 370,000 housing units in Gaza have been damaged, including 79,000 destroyed completely, the report said, along with commercial buildings. *—PTI*

2,100 held in pro-Palestinian protests in US

LOS ANGELES, 3 MAY

Police have arrested more than 2,100 people during pro-Palestinian protests at college campuses across the United States in recent weeks, sometimes using riot gear, tactical vehicles and flash-bang devices to clear tent encampments and occupied buildings.

One officer fired his gun inside a Columbia University administration building while clearing out protesters camped inside, a prosecutor's office confirmed.

No one was injured by the officer's actions late Tuesday inside Hamilton Hall on the Columbia campus, according to Doug Cohen, a spokesperson for District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office.

Cohen said on Thursday that the gun did not appear to be aimed at anyone, and that there were other officers but no students in the immediate vicinity. Bragg's office is conducting a review, a standard practice.

More than 100 people were taken into custody during the Columbia crackdown. *—PTI*

Colombia breaks off diplomatic ties with Israel

BOGOTA, 3 MAY

Colombia has become the latest Latin American country to announce it will break diplomatic relations with Israel over its military campaign in Gaza, but the repercussions for the South American nation could be broader than for other countries due to long-standing bilateral agreements over security matters.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Wednesday described Israel's actions in Gaza as "genocide" and announced his government would end diplomatic relations with Israel effective Thursday.

But he did not address how his decision could affect Colombia's military, which uses Israeli-built warplanes and machine guns to fight drug cartels and rebel groups, and a free trade agreement between both countries that went into effect in 2020.

Also in the region, Bolivia and Belize have also severed diplomatic relations with Israel over the Israel-Hamas war.

Colombia and Israel have signed dozens of agreements on wide-ranging issues, including education and trade, since they established diplomatic relations in 1957. But nothing links them closer than military contracts.

PHOTO: X/ @TIMESOFGAZA

- Also in the region, Bolivia and Belize have also severed diplomatic relations with Israel over the Israel-Hamas war

Colombia's military also uses Galil rifles, which were designed in Israel and for which Colombia acquired the rights to manufacture and sell. Israel also assists the South American country with its cybersecurity needs.

However, a day before Petro announced his decision, Colombian Defence Minister Ivan Velasquez told lawmakers that no new contracts will be signed with Israel, though existing ones will be fulfilled, including those for maintenance for the Kfir fighters and one for missile systems. *—PTI*

Turkiye halts imports and exports to Israel

Ankara, 3 May

Turkiye's says the country is halting imports and exports to Israel over its ongoing military actions in Gaza.. Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katzsaid said on X that Turkiye "is breaking agreements by blocking ports for Israeli imports and exports." —PTI

Gaza hostage dies amid ceasefire talks

Jerusalem, 3 May

Dror Or, a 49-year-old held captive in Gaza, has died, the Hostages Families Forum said Friday. Or marks the 38th hostage killed, the forum said. He was one of about 250 people abducted when Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October. *—PTI*

Syrian soldiers injured in Israeli airstrike

DAMASCUS, 3 MAY

Syrian defence ministry claimed on Friday that eight Syrian soldiers were injured in an Israeli airstrike near Damascus. The Times of Israel citing Syrian state-run broadcaster said the strike caused "material losses."

Israeli warplanes launched their missiles from over the Golan Heights at a site in the area of the capital, the Syrian defence ministry said according to the Syrian Arab News Agency.

Also Russian state media TASS quoted Dubai-based Al Hadath TV as saying that the attack targeted a base of Lebanon's Shia militia, Hezbollah. An alleged Israel airstrike on Iran's consulate in Syria on 1 April killed 13 people, following which Iran rained a barrage of missiles and drones over Israel most of which were staved off. *—ANI*

Pak: Restrictions imposed on movement of Chinese

MANSEHRA, 3 MAY

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has stopped Chinese nationals from travelling in the province without armoured vehicles, said a senior police official on Wednesday.

"As we are adopting all possible measures for the safety of Chinese nationals, they should not travel in the province without armoured vehicles in line with the government's directions," deputy inspector general of police in Hazara range Tahir Ayub Khan told a meeting here on Wednesday.

The participants discussed security arrangements for the Suki Kinari hydropower project in the Malkandi area of Kaghan Valley. Accompanied by district police officer Shafeeullah Gandapur, the DIG visited the sites of the Suki Kinari and Balakot hydropower projects. He also attended security meetings for the hydropower projects.

Pak journalist killed, in bomb blast in Balochistan

A senior journalist was killed and seven other people were injured in a bomb attack in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Friday, police said.

Muhammad Siddiq Mengal, a senior journalist was killed when a remote-controlled bomb hit his vehicle on the Sultan Ibrahim highway on the outskirts of Khuzdar town. *Courtesy, DAWN/PTI*

POLICE CHASE IN CANADA

Indian couple, grandchild among four killed in accident

TORONTO, 3 MAY

An Indian couple visiting Canada and their three-month-old grandchild were among four people killed on the spot in a multi-vehicle collision when Ontario police pursued a liquor store robbery suspect driving the wrong way.

All four people were pronounced dead at the scene on Highway 401 in Whitby, about 50 kilometres east of Toronto, police said on Thursday.

Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) said that two of the victims, a 60-year-old man and a 55-year-old woman, were visiting from India. However, the SIU did not release the names of the victims.

The couple's three-month-old grandson also died in the multi-vehicle collision. Highway 401 was closed for several hours after the incident on Monday, it said.

The agency said that the parents of the infant, his 33-year-old father and 27-year-old mother, were travelling in the same vehicle and were taken to hospital.

The mother's injuries are serious, the SIU said.

The 21-year-old robbery suspect was also killed in the collision, which involved at least six vehicles, CBC News reported. Officials have said the deadly car chase started with a liquor store robbery in Bowmanville and ended around 20 minutes later after the suspect in a cargo van led Durham police on a high-speed chase against opposing traffic on Highway 401.

A 38-year-old male passenger from the cargo van was also taken to the hospital to be treated for serious injuries.

Milica Maljkovic Birkett, a witness to the deadly police chase and had a lucky escape, said she didn't have time to think. *—PTI*

Orange alert was issued on Thursday PHOTO: X/@CORPORATEKHABAR

UAE rains: Dubai flights cancelled, schools shut

ABU DHABI, 3 MAY

Days after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) witnessed flooding in April, heavy rains have returned to the country with several flights being cancelled and delayed in and out of Dubai while people and students were asked to work and study from home, Khaleej Times reported.

An orange alert was issued on Thursday as heavy rains and thunderstorms lashed the UAE. Over the past few days, the UAE has been preparing for this wave of unstable weather, which is forecast to peak on 2 May until 3 May.

People have been advised to take safety measures across all sectors. Schools are on distance learning while companies have been asked to allow people to work from home. Parks and beaches have been shut.

Dubai announced work from home for government employees on 2 May and 3 May due to unstable weather conditions prevailing in the emirate,

- Earlier, an NCM expert said the impending weather condition is not anticipated to be the same as the rainfall seen on 16 April. Officials have discussed the precautionary measures that must be taken during this time

according to Khaleej Times.

Earlier, an NCM expert said the impending weather condition is not anticipated to be the same as the rainfall seen on 16 April. Officials have discussed the precautionary measures that must be taken during this time.

Furthermore, the government announced that all private schools in Dubai will have online learning due to expected unstable weather conditions. Five inbound flights to Dubai Airport were diverted overnight, while 9 arrivals and four outbound flights were cancelled. *—ANI*

KENYA FLOOD: GOVT ORDERS EVACUATIONS

NAIROBI, 3 MAY

The Kenyan government has ordered people living near 178 dams and reservoirs to evacuate as heavy rains continue.The agency had said in its prior report, at noon, that 13 people were dead and 21 people missing, just slightly higher than the toll on Wednesday.

On top of this, President William Ruto has warned the country could face its first-ever cyclone.

Some 210 people have died in Kenya since March, with a further 90 missing, according to the latest official estimates. A further 155 people have died in Tanzania, and 29 in Burundi.

Also, the death toll from heavy rains in Brazil's southern Rio Grande do Sul state jumped to 29 as of Thursday night, with another 60 people missing, according to the state's civil defence agency.

The agency had said in its prior report, at noon, that 13 people were dead and 21 people missing, just slightly higher than the toll on Wednesday. *—BBC News/PTI*

CYBERCRIMES

Taiwan under millions of cyberattacks

TAIPEI CITY, 3 MAY

Taiwan stands out as a beacon of democracy, innovation and resilience in an increasingly autocratic region. But this is under growing threat.

In recent years, China has used a variety of "grey zone" tactics to pressure Taiwan to accept the Communist Party's attempts at unification. This has included an onslaught of cyberattacks, which not only pose a significant threat to Taiwan's national security but also seek to undermine its democratic processes.

The attacks range from phishing attempts to sophisticated malware intrusions PHOTO: UNSPLASH

These attacks range from phishing attempts to sophisticated malware intrusions. Website defacement attacks and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks are often seen during significant events, such as the August 2022 visit of Nancy Pelosi, then-speaker of the US House of Representatives. Government agencies, educational institutions, convenience stores and train stations are among the targets.

Despite Taiwan's technological prowess and robust cybersecurity measures, it continues to be a major target for malicious actors seeking to sow chaos in the country.

According to senior government officials, Taiwan receives some five million cyberattacks a day. And Frontinet, a US-based cybersecurity firm, has found Taiwan experienced just over half of the billions of malware attacks detected in the Asia-Pacific region in the first half of 2023. *—Courtesy, The Conversation*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold slumps ₹350; silver remains flat

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Gold prices slumped by Rs 350 to Rs 72,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday in line with weak trends globally, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the precious metal had finished at Rs 72,350 per 10 grams. However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 83,500 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,000 per 10 grams, down by Rs 350 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,297 per ounce, down by USD 7 from the previous close. However, silver was marginally up at USD 26.50 per ounce. It had closed at USD 26.45 per ounce in the previous session. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 3 paise to end at 83.43 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

The rupee appreciated 3 paise to settle at 83.43 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a weak American currency and retreating crude oil prices. Forex traders said a massive selling in the domestic equity market and outflow of foreign funds capped the gains in the local currency. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.40 and moved in the range of 83.34 and 83.44 against the greenback during the session. The local unit finally settled at 83.43 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a rise of 3 paise from its previous close. The rupee had settled 3 paise lower at 83.46 against the dollar on Thursday. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee gained on a weak US dollar and a decline in crude oil prices. *—PTI*

Yes Bank gets tax demand order for ₹6.42 cr

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Yes Bank on Thursday said it has received a service tax demand order, which levied a penalty of over Rs 6.42 crore. It said the tax and interest demand is below the material threshold limit currently applicable to the bank. "The bank does not expect any material impact on financial, operation or other activities of the bank due to the said order," Yes Bank said. The bank will pursue an appeal against the order, it added. *—PTI*

Air India to start direct Delhi-Zurich flights from 16 June

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Air India will start direct flights from the national capital to Zurich from 16 June, and the Swiss city will be the seventh European destination that will be connected by the airline with non-stop services. The four times a week services will be operated by a Boeing 787 aircraft with a two-class configuration -- Economy and Business. The flights will be on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, according to a release on Friday. "With over 250 Swiss companies operating in India, hundreds of Indian companies in Switzerland, and a growing Indian diaspora of nearly 18,000, these flights will cater to a strong demand for business and leisure travel in both directions," Air India CEO and MD Campbell Wilson said. Currently, the airline operates 60 weekly flights to and from six cities in mainland Europe -- Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Milan, Paris, and Vienna. *—PTI*

6 Adani firms get SEBI showcause notice

The notices are for violation of party transactions, non-compliance with listing regulations

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

At least six Adani group firms have received show =cause notices from Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). The notices are for alleged violation of related party transactions and non-compliance with listing regulations, the companies said in stock exchange filings.

Group's flagship Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone, Adani Power, Adani Energy Solutions, Adani Total Gas and commodities firm Adani Wilmar in notes to their respective March quarter and FY24 financial results disclosed information on the SEBI notice.

The firms said there is no material non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations and no material consequential effect.

However, auditors of the companies, except those for Adani Total Gas and Adani Wilmar, issued a statements, implying that the outcome of the SEBI investigation may have a bearing on financial statements in the future.

Adani Green Energy is yet to announce its earnings while ACC and Ambuja Cement said they have not received any notice from SEBI on the matter and there was no open matter relating to them and any non-compliance with applicable regulations.

Adani Green Energy is yet to announce its earnings PHOTO: PTI

The SEBI notices to the six companies are part of a probe that followed short seller Hindenburg Research making damning allegations of corporate fraud and stock price manipulation against Adani Group in January 2023.

Though Adani vehemently denied all allegations and any wrongdoing, the report triggered a stock rout that wiped off about USD 150 billion of the group's market value at its lowest point.

Most of the group stocks have bounced back as the group plotted a comeback strategy. A show cause notice is not an indictment. It asks entities to explain why legal action should not be taken.

Adani Enterprises in its earning statement on Thursday said a short seller's report (SSR) made certain allegations against some of the Adani Group companies.

The matter also went to the Supreme Court, which observed that SEBI was investigating the matter. The SC also constituted an expert committee to investigate and suggest measures to strengthen existing laws and regulations.

The committee in its 6 May, 2023 report found "no regulatory failure in respect of applicable laws and regulations," it said. "SEBI also concluded its investigations in 22 of the 24 matters as per the status report dated 25 August, 2023 to Supreme Court."

On 3 January, 2024, Supreme Court disposed of all matters in various petitions including those relating to separate independent investigations relating to the allegations in the SSR. Further, Supreme Court directed SEBI to complete the pending two investigations, preferably within 3 months, and take its investigations (including 22 already completed) to their logical conclusion in accordance with law. *—PTI*

Adani Green Energy profit declines 39%

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) on Friday posted a 38.85 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 310 crore for the March quarter, mainly on account of increased expenses.

Its net profit was Rs 507 crore in the January-March period of the preceding 2022-23, the company said in an exchange filing.

During the fourth quarter of FY24, the company's total income fell to Rs 2,806 crore from Rs 2,977 crore a year ago.

The company's expenses surged to Rs 2,379 crore during the period under review, as against Rs 2,053 crore in the year-ago period.

In a separate statement, the company said its operational capacity grew at 35 per cent year-on-year to 10,934 MW with greenfield addition of 2,848 MW renewable capacity, including 2,418 MW solar and 430 MW wind projects.

With this, AGEL became the first company in India to cross the 10,000 MW renewable energy capacity.

AGEL's 10,934 MW operational portfolio will power more than 5.8 million homes and avoid about 21 million tonnes of CO2 emissions annually.

The sale of energy increased 47 per cent year-on-year to 21,806 million units in FY24, primarily backed by strong capacity addition, consistent solar CUF (capacity utilisation factor) and improved wind and hybrid CUF. *—PTI*

Renewable energy accounted for 71% of power generation in FY24

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

In India during FY 23-24, renewable energy (RE) contributed more than 70 per cent of the 26 GW (GigaWatt) of new power generated in the country.

India's total installed energy capacity has now reached 442 GW, with RE comprising approximately 33 per cent (144 GW) and hydro contributing 11 per cent (47 GW), according to the report by CEEW Centre for Energy Finance (CEEW-CEF).

The share of Coal in India's total installed capacity fell below the 50 per cent mark for the first time.

The report further highlights that solar energy, including both grid-scale and rooftop installations, continued to dominate India's RE capacity addition, constituting approximately 81 per cent (15 GW) of the total RE addition in FY24.

PHOTO: PTI

The wind capacity addition nearly doubled, reaching 3.3 GW compared to 2.3 GW in FY23. Additionally, nuclear capacity (1.4 GW) was added for the first time since FY17.

In line with India's ambitious renewable energy targets, RE auctions soared to a record high, reaching approximately 41 GW of auctioned capacity in FY24.

Furthermore, the report highlighted the conclusion of eight auctions with energy storage components, indicating a growing shift towards innovative power procurement formats.

The report also noted a rise in peak power demand, reaching a new high of 240 GW in FY24. Factors contributing to this included a fast-growing economy and weather anomalies such as lower-than-expected rainfall and above-normal temperatures.

The report also highlights that the amendments made by the Ministry of Power to the Electricity Rules of 2022, mandating the sale of un-requisitioned surplus power on exchanges, are expected to enhance supply-side liquidity and promote competitive prices on power exchanges. *—ANI*

SEBI relief for portfolio managers' clients

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Capital markets regulator SEBI on Friday relaxed the digital onboarding process for clients of portfolio managers, a move aimed at facilitating ease of doing business.

While onboarding clients, portfolio managers will have to ensure that new clients use a typed or electronically written note saying that they have understood the fee structure rather than the current practice that focuses on clients giving the same in their own handwriting.

The change, aimed at making digital onboarding easier, would become effective from 1 October, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said.

The move came after SEBI observed certain operational challenges in complying with the requirement of a handwritten note on the annexure of fees in the agreements, including the non-availability of a stylus at the location of the investors.

PHOTO: PTI

This requirement was creating a hindrance towards the complete digital onboarding of the clients.

Also, the regulator said that the standard procedure for onboarding of clients through digital mode would be specified by the industry body Association of Portfolio Managers in India (APMI) in consultation with the markets regulator.

SEBI said that portfolio managers will have to provide an annexure detailing the fee calculation. *—PTI*

B'LURU: SHRIRAM BUYS 4 ACRES FOR RS 250 CRORE

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Shriram Properties Ltd has bought 4acre land in Bengaluru to develop a housing project having a revenue potential of over Rs 250 crore.

In a regulatory filing, the company announced the acquisition of a prime 4-acre land parcel at Chandapura, close to Electronic City in Bengaluru.

It did not disclose the deal value.Shriram Properties would develop around 4 lakh square feet of aggregate saleable area, comprising about 350 meticulously designed apartments.

Shriram Properties has a strong pipeline of 47 projects with 51 million square feet of saleable area, including 25 ongoing projects with an aggregate saleable area of 23.5 million square feet as of 31 March, 2024. *—PTI*

SENSEX DOWN TO 73K

Markets dips amid rumours of tax changes

Among the Nifty companies, there were 13 advances PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

The stock market witnessed a downturn at the close of trading on Friday, with selling pressure in index heavyweights dragging both the Nifty and Sensex into the red. Rumours circulating in the market regarding potential tax changes in the upcoming Union Budget of July 2024 added to the negative sentiment.

The Sensex plummeted by 732.96 points, closing at 73,878.15, while the Nifty dropped by 172.35 points, ending the day at 22,475.85.

Among the Nifty companies, there were 13 advances and 37 declines.

Notable gainers among the Nifty firms included Coal India, Bajaj Finance, Grasim, Tata Consumer Services, and ONGC. However, Bharti Airtel, Reliance, Nestle India, Maruti, and JSW Steel were among the top losers.

According to market expert Ajay Bagga, there were rumors suggesting that tax treatment for all asset classes would be equalized in the upcoming budget, bringing long-term capital gains to the marginal tax rate.

Bagga emphasized that while the actual revenue impact of such a move is doubtful, the rumors had a significant negative impact on market sentiment. Bagga commented on the market situation, stating, "There was selling in index heavyweights that brought the Nifty and Sensex down. There were rumors in the market that tax treatment for all asset classes will be equalized in the Union Budget of July 2024. This would bring long-term capital gains to the marginal tax rate. *—ANI*

MARKETS HAVE HIGHER RETURNS THAN GOLD, FDS

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

Indian stock markets have generated an impressive performance during the FY 2023-24. The Nifty 50 index delivered a substantial return of 29 percent in FY 24.

According to the data shared by the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the growth of the Indian markets has marked the eighth consecutive year of positive returns. Notably, the last instance of negative returns in the Indian market dates back to 2015, highlighting the consistent upward trajectory of Indian equities. While the FDs (Fixed Deposits) have given a return of around 7 per cent in the last year and Gold returns have also surged to 17 per cent in FY24. Comparing the performance of the Indian stock market with its American and European counterparts reveals India's strong position in terms of returns. While the Nifty 50 provided a return of 29 percent, the S&P 500 index of America offered a slightly lower return of 27.9 per cent. *—ANI*

GODREJ PROPERTIES POSTS HIGHEST-EVER PROFIT AT ₹471 CR

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Realty firm Godrej Properties on Friday reported its highest-ever quarterly profit as earnings jumped 14 per cent annually to Rs 471.26 crore in the March quarter, spurred by better income and strong housing sales.

Its net profit stood at Rs 412.14 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 1,914.82 crore in the fourth quarter of last fiscal from Rs 1,838.82 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, the company informed in a regulatory filing.

During the 2023-24 fiscal, the company's net profit increased to Rs 725.27 crore from Rs 571.39 crore in the preceding year. Total income rose to Rs 4,334.22 crore last fiscal year from Rs 3,039 crore in the 2022-23 financial year.

Godrej Properties, one of the leading real estate developers in the country and part of business conglomerate Godrej Group, said it has achieved the highest ever quarterly and annual net profit. Pirojsha Godrej, Executive Chairperson, said the company delivered a robust and well-rounded performance in 2023-24 registering its best-ever bookings. *—PTI*

COOK HAILS INDIA

Apple clinches strong double-digit growth

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Apple CEO Tim Cook on Friday said the company grew strong double-digit in India, clinching a new March quarter revenue record amid an "incredibly exciting market". Describing India market as a "major focus", Cook said Apple is working on the entire ecosystem from developer to the market to operations, and that he is "very pleased" with the growth numbers.

Cook further added: "In terms of the operational side or supply chain side, we are producing there; from a pragmatic point of view, you need to produce there to be competitive."

The Cupertino-based iPhone maker has set revenue records in more than a dozen countries and regions. These include, among others, March quarter records in India, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as Canada, Spain, and Turkey.

Apple continues to expand its channels PHOTO: PTI

On Apple's India report card, Cook said the company has both operational things going on and go-to-market, alongside various initiatives.

"We just opened a couple of stores as last year, and we see enormous opportunity there," he said.

Apple continues to expand its channels, and is also working on the developer ecosystem.

"And we've been very pleased that there is a rapidly-growing base of developers there. And so, we're working all of the entire ecosystem from developer to the market to operations, the whole thing. And I just -- I could not be more excited and enthusiastic about it," he said.

Apple is also investing in new solar and wind power in the US and Europe, both to power its growing operations and users' devices.

"And we're working with partners in India and the US to replenish 100 per cent of the water we use in places that need it most, with the goal of delivering billions of gallons of water benefits over the next two decades," Cook said.

Announcing its financial results for its fiscal 2024 second quarter ended March, Apple said it posted a quarterly revenue of USD 90.8 billion, down 4 per cent year on year.

Luca Maestri, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Apple, said the company is particularly pleased with strong momentum in emerging markets, "as we set first-half revenue records in several countries and regions including Latin America, the Middle East, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Turkey". *—PTI*

'Majority of Indians learnt about podcasts recently'

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

India has emerged as the third-largest market for podcast listeners globally even as around 78 per cent of people surveyed got to know about this media recently, a report said on Thursday.

According to the report, around 82 per cent of respondents were initially unaware of podcasts, highlighting a significant opportunity for awareness-building efforts.

India has surged to become the third-largest market for podcast listeners globally, yet only 12 per cent of Indians are currently engaged, leaving a vast untapped audience waiting to be explored, the report prepared by UNPAC Research (OPC) in support of Ideabrew Studios said.

Authenticity and vulnerability in podcast conversations are highly valued by listeners, fostering a deeper connection with hosts and content, it said.

The report is based on responses from 2,170 individuals across 10 cities in India, including Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Indore, Patna, and Jaipur, the report gauged awareness and listenership statistics.

Additionally, detailed interviews with 1,800 active listeners provided invaluable insights into their behaviour and preferences.

Sheetal Choksi, Director, UNPAC Research said that the Podcast Pulse is a comprehensive report on podcast consumption in India.

Regional podcasts are identified as a driving force in shaping the industry's future, offering audiences a more relatable and culturally resonant listening experience, he added.

The Unpac Research (OPC) Pvt. Ltd. is a full service qualitative research agency. Ideabrew Studios is a podcast production and full-service content solutions company. *—PTI*

ICC issues team rankings; Aussies take top spot in Tests

India retains supremacy in both white-ball formats

DUBAI, 3 MAY

International Cricket Council (ICC) issued the annual team rankings update on Friday, with Australia taking the top spot in Test cricket and India maintaining supremacy in both white-ball formats.

Reigning ICC World Test Championship winners Australia have overtaken India to secure the top spot in whites on the back of their stunning 209-run triumph over India in the World Test Championship decider at The Oval last year, as per ICC.

It helped improve Australia's rating to 124 points, four clear of their closest rival and last year's World Test Championship runners-up India (120) and 19 points clear of third-placed England (105).

It is the only change at the top of the Test rankings, with South Africa (103), New Zealand (96), Pakistan (89), Sri Lanka (83), West Indies (82) and Bangladesh (53) remaining unchanged in spots between fourth and ninth.

India lost the top spot on the team rankings **PHOTO: X/@ani_digital**

While India (122 points) may have lost the top spot on the Test team rankings, they do remain out in front in both white-ball formats and have increased their lead at the head of proceedings in ODI cricket to six rating points over Australia (116), despite a loss to the Men in Yellow in the final of ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 following win streak.

Third-placed South Africa (112) closed the gap on Australia to just four rating points, while Pakistan (106) and New Zealand (101) round out the top five.

Seventh-placed Sri Lanka (93) are now just two rating points behind sixth-placed England (95), with Bangladesh (86), Afghanistan (80) and West Indies (69) rounding out the top 10.

India (264) remains well out in front of the updated T20I rankings, although their lead has been reduced from 11 points to just seven with second-placed Australia (257) jumping in front of third-placed England (252).

South Africa (250) rose two spots from sixth to fourth and now sits just two rating points behind England, with Pakistan (247) dropping two places to seventh and Scotland (192) overtake Zimbabwe (191) to claim 12th spot. *—ANI*

Defender Kelley O'Hara plans to retire from soccer

WASHINGTON, 3 MAY

US team and Gotham FC defender Kelley O'Hara announced that she is retiring from soccer at the end of the National Women's Soccer League season. O'Hara, 35, is a two-time Women's World Cup winner, an Olympic gold medallist and a two-time National Women's Soccer League title winner. She made her announcement on the Just Women's Sports platform, where she has hosted a popular players' podcast. O'Hara, who was a free-agent signing by Gotham in 2023, has played in the NWSL for 11 seasons. Gotham won the NWSL title last season. In 160 appearances with the national team, O'Hara has played in four total World Cups and three Olympics. She is one of just four U.S. players to be selected for four World Cup squads. *—PTI*

Mallika Nadda is appointed as chairperson of APAC

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Mallika Nadda, President of Special Olympics Bharat, has been appointed as Chairperson of the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Advisory Council (APAC), for three years. Mallika Nadda, wife BJP National President JP Nadda, has been serving as the Chairperson of Special Olympics Bharat since 2021. She is one of the leading social activists with a keen sense of social responsibility, dedicated to serving the cause of the differently-abled, underprivileged and women empowerment for over 30 years. Her term would run for three years, from 1 May 2024 until 31 March, 2027. Mallika Nadda has been felicitated with prestigious accolades including the Rajiv Gandhi Manav Sewa Puraskar Award in 2010. *—ANI*

Foden, Shaw win Football Writers' Association awards

LONDON, 3 MAY

Manchester City duo Phil Foden and Khadija Shaw have been named footballers of the year by the Football Writers' Association. Foden, 23, has scored 24 goals and provided 10 assists in 50 appearances in all competitions for City this term. The England midfielder received 42% of the vote for the men's award, beating Declan Rice in second and City teammate Rodri in third. Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard, Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins and Chelsea forward Cole Palmer made up the rest of the top six. Shaw, 27, is the Women's Super League top scorer this season with 21 goals in 18 games. City lead WSL by six points with two games remaining. *—BBC News*

WI player Devon Thomas banned for five years

DUBAI, 3 MAY

International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday imposed a five-year period of ineligibility from all cricket on West Indies player Devon Thomas after he accepted breaching seven counts of the anti-corruption codes of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) and the Caribbean Premier League (CPL). The ICC announced the period of ineligibility in its capacity as the Designated Anti-Corruption Official under the relevant codes, ruling that the last 18 months of the period of ineligibility would be suspended. This period of ineligibility has been backdated to 23 May, 2023, the date Thomas was provisionally suspended. Thomas played 34 matches for West Indies across formats, having made his debut in 2009. *—ANI*

PLAYOFFS MATCH

Will Jacks and Virat Kohli celebrate after winning the match between Gujarat Titans and RCB **PHOTO: PTI**

RCB and GT eye mandatory win to keep hopes alive

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

From a maths perspective, Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Gujarat Titans can still reach the IPL playoffs, but they need to ward off inner gremlins on Saturday to notch a mandatory win to keep that dream flickering.

The Royal Challengers are the bottom-dwellers with six points from 10 matches, while the Titans are placed eighth with eight points from 10 matches.

However, the floundering outings of Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals (10 points each) have fuelled the hopes of these two teams of sneaking into the middle tier of the points table and from there to the knockouts.

But both RCB and GT will know that keeping their own house in order is a better option than depending on other teams to stay afloat as the IPL group stage is entering its business end.

In that context, the Faf du Plessis-led side will feel a tad more confident than their opponents after registering wins in their last two matches.

They have also found new heroes across these two games – Will Jacks powered his way to a match-winning century against GT, while Cameron Green finally lived up to his tag of all-rounder with crucial runs and wickets against Hyderabad.

The star spinner has taken just eight wickets across 10 matches while giving eight runs an over, a significantly higher economy rate than his overall 6.7 in IPL since 2017.

In IPL 2023, Rashid had given away 8.24 runs an over but the Afghan took 27 wickets from 17 matches. This year, the wicket column too remained barren.

The pace bowlers offer a similar storyline. In the absence of Mohammed Shami, who is recuperating after a surgery, the Titans' most experienced duo of Umesh Yadav and Mohit Sharma have gone for plenty. *—PTI*

Swiatek races past Madison, seals SF spot

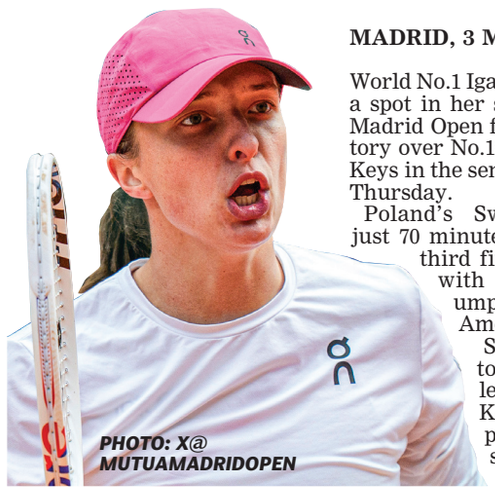


PHOTO: X@MUTUAMADRIDOPEN

MADRID, 3 MAY

World No.1 Iga Swiatek sealed a spot in her second straight Madrid Open final with a victory over No.18 seed Madison Keys in the semifinal clash on Thursday.

Poland's Swiatek needed just 70 minutes to reach her third final of the year with a 6-1, 6-3 triumph against the American.

Swiatek got out to a fast start, leading 3-0, and Keys nearly pulled back on service. The American smashed three powerful forehands in succession to reach double break point on Swiatek's serve at 3-1.

Swiatek, on the other hand, used a pair of her best serves of the day to stave off those opportunities, and the top seed held on for a 4-1 victory. Swiatek was unbeaten in the opening, taking a one-set lead.

"I'm happy that we can play a final against the top players. It shows consistency. For sure it's going to be a challenge, whoever it's gonna be, and a tough match. I will be ready. I will focus on myself. Yeah, we'll see," Swiatek said.

The second set continued in a similar spirit. Swiatek took the lead early on, scoring a passing goal to make it 2-1. In the following game, Keys had another break opportunity to draw back on serve, but Swiatek held on and maintained her lead.

Swiatek had three match points at 5-3 thanks to a tremendous forehand serve return. The No.1 seed only needed one of those opportunities, which came after Keys sent a forehand long to end the match.

For her third WTA 1000 title of 2024, Swiatek will face either No.2 seed Aryna Sabalenka or No.4 seed Elena Rybakina for the title on Saturday. *—ANI*

Shubhankar, Gaganjeet seek golfing bromance on Paris Olympics debut

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Leading Indian golfers Shubhankar Sharma and Gaganjeet Bhullar are set to make their Olympic debut in Paris 2024. Shubhankar and Gaganjeet are ranked 47 and 52, respectively, on the Olympic Golf Rankings (OGR) as of April 29 and are expected to be among the 60 professionals teeing off on August 1 at the Le Golf National.

Bolstered by support from the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports' Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), the Chandigarh-based pros are confident of holding their rankings high enough to make the grade. Shubhankar was recently upgraded to the TOPS Core group from the Development group while Gaganjeet was inducted directly into the Core group.

The financial assistance extended to Shubhankar under TOPS will cover the cost of competing in nine DP World Tour events apart from two Major championships - the United States Open and British Open - besides coach fees, engaging physiotherapist and dietician services, airfare, board and lodging and out-of-pocket allowance.

Shubhankar Sharma **PHOTO: @FISTOSPORTS**

Shubhankar has immense respect for Gaganjeet Bhullar, his senior on the professional circuit. "Gagan is a proven champion and I look up to him with a lot of regard and respect.Gaganjeet, an 11-time Asian Tour champion and 2006 Asian Games silver medal winner, said he is hungry to do well in Paris. "It is a proud moment for me to be included in TOPS. Though I have been supported by sponsors in the last few years, *—ANI*

After strong 2023, athletes hope to make an impact in World Relay

NASSAU, 3 MAY

A 15-member strong Indian athletics contingent will look to make an impact in scenic Nassau and hope to qualify for the Paris Olympics in three events when the the two-day World Athletics Relays Bahamas 24 commences on Saturday.

The Indian men's 4x400 relay team has been making waves of late, coming up with impressive performances at the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo and following it up by challenging the USA's aura of invincibility at the World Championships in Budapest last August.

Men's 4x400m relay team, consisting of Muhammed Anas Yahiya, Amoj Jacob, Muhammad Ajmal Variyathodi, and Rajesh Ramesh **PHOTO: ANI**

On a high following those superb performances last year, India would be hoping to reset the national and Asian record of 2:59.05 seconds.

A total of 32 teams will be in the fray in men's 4x400m, while 27 teams are in contention in women's 4x400m. In mixed 4x400, 30 teams are in the fray. *—PTI*

Knicks to face Pacers in Eastern Conference semis

INDIANAPOLIS, 3 MAY

The New York Knicks will face the Indiana Pacers in the Eastern Conference semi-finals after both progressed from the first round of the NBA play-offs. The Knicks, who are the second seed in the East, won 118-115 in Philadelphia to clinch a 4–2 series win over the 76ers. The Milwaukee Bucks welcomed back Damian Lillard after missing the previous two games through an Achilles injury but they were unable to take their series with Indiana to a decider. *—BBC News*

TODAY'S MATCH

RCB

GUJARAT TITANS

Time: 7.30 pm

Where To Watch: Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru

Chawrasia top Indian tied at 13th place in Korea

SEOUL, 3 MAY

India's SSP Chawrasia, who is winless on the Asian Tour since 2017, shot a bogey-free 4-under 67 to rise to tied 13th at the halfway stage of the GS Caltex Maekyung Open here on Friday.

Chawrasia, who shot 1-over 72 in the first round is now 3-under and up from overnight tied 52nd.

Chawrasia was among only two Indians to make the cut this week in Korea. The other one was Ajeetesh Sandhu (71-71) and he was tied 42nd.

Chawrasia started from the 10th and birdied the 11th and the 18th and then added two more birdies on second and ninth.

Thailand's Chonlatit Chuenboonngam upstaged the favoured home stars from Korea to take the halfway lead after shooting the lowest round of the week so far.

His brilliant bogey-free nine-under-par 62 featured eagles on two of the par fours and was one short of 23-year-old course record. *—PTI*

SSP Chawrasia **PHOTO: PTI**

MATCH ON 26 MAY

What's at stake on Championship's final day?

WEMBLEY, 3 MAY

The Championship season draws to a close on Saturday, with a number of matters at the top and bottom still to be decided. Town close in on successive promotions

Leicester City wrapped up the Championship title on Monday with a comprehensive 3-0 win at Preston.

The Whites' heavy defeat opened the door for Ipswich, who had two games in hand on them, to wrap promotion up before the final day.

Should the Suffolk side get the job done on Saturday it will also guarantee that once again the three teams relegated from the Premier League will not all bounce back.

Leicester City wrapped up the Championship title **PHOTO: BBC**

As for Leeds, three defeats from their past five games mean they are likely to be the first second-tier side since Sunderland in 1998 to win 90 points or more and not go up automatically.

Leeds and Saints are not the only promotion hopefuls who have hit rocky ground at the wrong time.

West Brom had been fifth for five months before a 3-0 defeat at relegation-threatened Sheffield Wednesday last week. That defeat has opened the door for Hull City to potentially pinch a play-off spot on the final day if they can win at 21st-placed Plymouth.

Albion are still in the driving seat though and goal difference means they simply need to avoid losing to 10th-placed Preston to be sure of a play-off berth.

Down at the bottom, Rotherham's relegation was confirmed some time ago and they will end the season without a single away victory.

Huddersfield Town are almost certain to join them as they need to beat promotion-chasing Ipswich, with Plymouth losing to Hull City and overturn a 15-goal deficit.

Blues have endured a torrid campaign after sacking John Eustace, appointing England Wayne Rooney. *—BBC News*